LIVES THAT INSPIRE

VOLUME III

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PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

PREFACE

Nation-building is a long drawn-out process. A nation can be compared with the human mind. The mind is impacted upon by various kinds of influences, which are sometimes similar, at times complement each other and mutually contradictory at some other point of time. Nation-building is not done by a few prominent personalities, but it is the nation which shapes these personalities. Indeed, once moulded, the personality itself exercises its own impact on the nation. The biggest force that creates history is the people. Great men are those who guide the people on to the path of progress. Though the loftiest thoughts lie dormant in books, the colossal personality of these figures transforms these ideas into a vehicle of change.

This collection comprises life-sketches of such great personalities of India, whose thoughts not only influenced the society during their times but are a source of inspiration for the country even today. All these great names are indelibly associated with the honour and identity of our country.

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AKBAR

—Hansraj Rahbar

INDIA has had innumerous kings and emperors who had greatly expanded their kingdom during their rule. Their opponents trembled to think of their strength and power. Courtiers and servants bowed to their every wish. After death, however, few remembered or respected them. Perhaps the only two exceptions were Ashoka and Akbar. Even today their tales are recounted with reverence and respect.

Humayun, Akbar's father was desperately looking for help after his throne was captured. He took shelter with Rana Virsaal of Amarkot. It was there in the desert region of Sindh that Akbar was born on 23rd November 1542. Distributing the little saffron that he had amongst friends and companions, he said — "If I were the ruler at Delhi, I would have distributed diamonds and jewellery on this auspicious occasion. Right now I have only this to give. Please take it and give your blessings to the new born - hoping that one day this boy's fame will spread far and wide like the fragrance of this saffron."

Unable to regain his throne, Humayun left India for Iran. Shah Tehmasp, helped him with an army of 14 thousand soldiers. With the help of this huge army he defeated his brothers Kamraan, Hindaal and Askari to win back Kabul and Kandahar.

Just as he recaptured Kabul and Kandahar from his brothers, he heard that Sher Shah's son and grandson were at war with each other over the throne of Delhi. This was an opportune moment and once more Humayun attacked Delhi. In Februrary 1555, he wrested Lahore from Sikander Sur and in July laid claims to Agra and Delhi. Before he could even begin to control his empire, on 24th January 1556, he died after a fall from his library steps. Akbar was in Punjab with Behram Khan at that time. On 14th of February, 1556, he was proclaimed emperor.

Akbar was a young boy of 13 and enemies did not miss this opportunity. Aadil Shah Sur's efficient army's chief commander and Minister Hemu, defeated the Mughal governor Tardi Baig and captured Delhi and Agra. Renaming himself Hemchandra Vikramaditya, he claimed the throne of Delhi. Whoever held Delhi was known as the Emperor of India, so Akbar and Bairam Khan decided to tackle Hemu first. They set out from Punjab and the two armies clashed at Panipat. Initially the Mughal army was facing defeat, but Hemu was hit by an arrow in the eye. As he fell unconscious, "Hemu's army panicked and fled. Thus the Mughals won. Hemu was captured and brought before Akbar in chains. Bairam Khan presented him and said — "Great Emperor! Here is your first captive. Colour your sword with the blood of his head and celebrate your first victory"

Akbar, however, smiled and said - "Cutting off the head of a captive man in chains does not prove any greatness. My sword will not commit such an act. Take him away."

It is said that Bairam Khan himself beheaded Hemu. When word got around about Akbar's benevolence, people sang his praises.

Once more Delhi and Agra came under the Mughal rulers. Akbar became the Emperor of India but the real power lay in the hands of Bairam Khan. Having been Humayun's trusted lieutenant, he ruled as he wished. He did not leave any stones unturned in order to strengthen the Mughal rule. He put young Akbar on the throne, won the battle of Panipat and defeated all opponents and enemies of the empire. After sometime he became so impertinent that he even began to disregard the young emperor's orders. Akbar, now 18, did not like this and thought himself capable of ruling the kingdom himself. Thus, he called Bairam Khan and said, "Baba, I along with the entire Mughal empire is much obliged to you. Neither can I forget what you have done for me, nor can I repay you for it. You have taught me a great deal and I am capable of looking after the empire myself. You have advanced in age and it is time for you to relax. You should make a pilgrimage to Mecca."

To this, Bairam Khan replied "What did you say your Majesty?

I should go for Haj?"

Akbar said, "Yes, it is befitting your age."

But Bairam Khan enquired, "And you will manage all the affairs of the empire?"

Akbar replied, "Do not worry and proceed without any worry. I am no longer that inexperienced."

Bairam Khan fell silent and started out for the Haj. However, a short distance away from Delhi he revolted. Akbar had foreseen this and had sent the army after him. Bairam Khan was defeated near Jalandhar. He was captured and brought before Akbar. Akbar had not forgotten the service of his teacher and protector. Very gently he said, "Baba, I had told you that I am no longer a child. I have matured and am now the Emperor of India, but you could not trust my words."

Bairam Khan— "No doubt I made a mistake."

Akbar— "Then what is the punishment for this fault?"

Bairam Khan— "Death! and he bowed his head."

Akbar laughed and said, "I cannot punish my Baba. Now you have realized that Akbar can manage the empire. Therefore go for the Haj with a free mind and there even this grave mistake shall be forgiven."

In January 1561, while Bairam Khan was on his way to Mecca, he was murdered by a Lohani Afghan. Bairam Khan had earlier killed his father and that was avenged.

Now Akbar took charge of all the state affairs. The chieftans, who till recently spoke against Bairam Khan to Akbar, now began to go against Akbar's wishes. They believed that so young a person would not be able to rule for long. However, Akbar understood all this and decided to rule independently. Leader of the revolting chiefs was Adam Khan. Akbar was forced to have him eliminated. Akbar was unlettered, but he had a powerful understanding. He had learnt a great deal from his experiences. He wanted to rule the empire with new methods.

India was broken up into numerous small kingdoms. On one side

was Surma Sardar, who was bent on taking the Delhi throne and on the other was the Rajput king who was famous for his bravery. Akbar strengthened his army in order to suppress any revolts. He realized that if he could make the Rajputs his ally, the Mughal empire would be greatly strengthened. For many years, they fought each other and Akbar succeeded in capturing Gujarat, Mewar and Kathiawar. Finally he managed to win over the Rajputs and honoured them with high posts in his court. Raja Man Singh was one of his most important courtiers. One by one, all the Rajput rulers came under Akbar except for Rana Pratap and Uday Singh of Chittor. With the help of the Rajputs, Akbar won many battles and united almost the entire country.

Apart from establishing peace and unity in the empire, Akbar also gave attention to development. He knew that India was a great country with a great cultural heritage. The majority of the people were Hindus and their way of life was different. If the Mughals were to establish themselves in this country, they would have to imbibe the culture and heritage as their own. They would have to win over the people by showing respect for their way of living. With this in mind, Akbar adopted a number of Indian ways of life.

Religion was causing a lot of rifts and Akbar was keen to smoothen them out. Akbar was unlettered because his childhood days, when he should have been learning, were spent in Kabul. At that time Humayun had stationed himself there and was making plans to recapture Delhi. Akbar spent his time playing with pigeons and dogs. This pastime grew with age and even when he came to Delhi, he went out hunting for cheetahs and deer. He loved watching horse and elephant races. Elephants which could not be trained by anyone were brought before him, and he would often endanger himself to bring it under control. Though unlettered, he was in no way an ignorant man. He had a very sharp memory. Just by listening he enhanced his knowledge. He knew numerous poems by heart. He had all the famous stories of his time read out to him. As far as religion was concerned, he had all the religious texts read out to him. He often called leaders of different religions and held debates in which he too participated. After having heard

the *Mahabharata* he was impatient to have it translated. He had a special *Ibadatkhana* (place of worship) built at Fatehpur Sikri where he held religious debates.

Akbar had two advisors for religious and cultural matters - the two brothers Abul Fazal and Faizi. All the debates were written down and Akbar later pondered over them. When he had gathered sufficient knowledge about all the religions, he said to Faizi — "I want to start a new religion which would have all the good points of the different religions."

To this, Abul Fazal replied, "It is an excellent thought, your Majesty, but do you think the people will accept it?"

Akbar said, "It will not be imposed - whoever wishes shall accept it, whoever does not is free to follow his own religion. By embracing this new religion, there will be less religious clashes and people will get the good teaching of all the religions in one."

Thus, Akbar started the new religion *Din - e - Ilahi,* which included the good teachings from several religions. It contained a great deal from Hinduism too. Akbar was a sun worshipper and often gave audience to his subjects from a window.

During Akbar's rule *Din - e - Ilahi* became the court religion, but it died with him. It did, however result in a few good things. Earlier the Emperor was only the political leader. The religious leader was the *Ulema* and he held a powerful position in the affairs of the kingdom too. After founding the new religion Akbar became the religious head and the *Ulemas* lost their power. Akbar had the Imam of Fatehpur Sikri removed and had the religious texts read in his own name. He also proclaimed that in any religious conflict the final decision would be that of the Sultan's. This infuriated the *Ulemas* but there was nothing they could do.

Just as he tried to encompass the good teachings of all religions, similarly, Akbar tried to bring together the best of art and literature. He had a number of Sanskrit texts translated. He had many artists at his court - more Hindus than Muslims. He had a number of magnificient buildings constructed at Fatehpur Sikri. They blended the grandeur of Hindu temples with the beauty of Irani architecture.

Humayun's tomb in Delhi has also been built in the same style. It shows the great influence of Irani architecture. At the same time the lower parts of the buiding shows the Hindu influence. Even the white marble has been laid out in the Hindustani style.

Apart from large buildings Akbar also built a number of forts, ponds, road side inns, schools, lakes and wells. This shows to what extent he had adopted the customs and culture of India. He was truly successful in winning over the Hindus and Rajputs. Akbar appreciated talent and gathered around him a large group of talented artists and intellectuals. Of the Navratna (nine gems) the most famous were Abul Fazal, Faizi, Raja Man Singh, Raja Birbal, Raja Todarmal and Tansen.

Through his 'nine gems' Akbar brought in a number of changes which saw an all round development of the country. Man Singh was a brave soldier who helped to establish peace and unity in the land by winning many battles. Raja Todarmal helped in making the laws concerning the land. These particularly helped in bringing about an improvement in agriculture. Abul Fazal and Faizi were not only warriors but scholars of Pharsi (Persian) and Sanskrit too. They were Akbar's advisors on religious and cultural affairs. Tansen was a famous singer. He holds a high place in Hindustani Music and his ragas and raginis are very famous. Birbal on one hand was extremely clever at handling affairs of the State. On the other he was a great entertainer. The clever banter and jokes between Akbar and Birbal are well known far and wide.

The credit for bringing together a galaxy of talented persons and getting them to give off their best, goes entirely to Akbar. This resulted in financial, political and cultural improvement of the whole country. Thus, it was that he came to be known as Akbar the Great.

Akbar was of medium height with a strong built. He had an extremely attractive and inspiring personality. He was full of simplicity and humility, that often Akbar came down from the throne and sat on the floor. Sometimes, he would often work along with the labourers. He accepted the small gifts that the common people got him, but never bothered to even look at the costly gifts

that the wealthy people presented. He had food once in a day but was very fond of fruits. Akbar was the first emperor who smoke tobacco. Tobacco was brought here by Portuguese. Earlier Akbar used to wear Mughal outfits but later he took to wearing a long *Choubandi* with the *Cummerbund* and a Rajput style turban. The later Mughal rulers followed the same style of dressing.

Akbar died on 17th October 1605. After him, his son Salim took the name of Jahangir and ascended the throne.

After Ashoka, Akbar was the brighest star that our country had. He was a patriot and hero in the true sense. He had an uncanny farsightedness. Before him, the entire country was plagued with bloody wars from time to time. Within the country people could not trust each other. Due to Akbar's policies, for many years, even after his death there was peace and prosperity all over the country. He wanted the same respect among the people for both Hindu as well as Muslim culture, literature, music, art and science. He even hoped that Hindus and Muslims would together build up an Indian community. He was the cultural prophet of the country. Much later Gandhiji talked of the same interchange and intermingling. Then, is it not true that there was only one great personality who can be compared to him? And he was Akbar.

TODARMAL

—**Srinath Singh**

AKBAR had nine gems in his court. They were Raja Birbal, Raja Man Singh, Raja Todarmal, Hakim Humam, Mullah Dopiyaja, Faizi, Abul Fazal, Raheem and Tansen. In matters of the state there was no one to compare with Abul Fazal, no warrior equal to Man Singh, and Todarmal had both these qualities.

Todarmal is considered to be amongst the best administrators. Even in Akbar's court he had no equal in the craft of warfare. He was not born of royal parentage, but because of his efficiency, he rose from an ordinary clerk to the highest rank during Akbar's rule. He was given the title of Raja. He was a stickler for rules and efficient work. The laws that he made for governance and taxations continued throughout the Mughal era and British rule in India. Some of them are even continuing today.

He was born in village Laharpur in the Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh. Those were the days when government officials were tyrranical and burdened the farmers with arbitary taxes. Todarmal wished to relieve the farmers of this burden. With this in mind he used to suggest such measures to his higher officials, that would enrich the state treasury and at the same time obviate tyranny on the farmers. By and by Akbar heard of him and in 1573 when he conquered Gujarat, he sent for Todarmal to manage the affairs of land distribution. There he fixed land revenue after measuring the land, verifying its quality, and considering the crops that could be grown on it. Within two years, peace spread all over Gujarat. The farmers were happy and at the same time the state treasury was full. Seeing this Akbar was so happy that he put Todarmal in charge of land affairs all over his empire.

Todarmal divided the entire empire into 182 *parganas* (administrative subdivision), in a way that would yield 1 crore rupees annual land revenue from each one. Each pargana was put under

an officer who was called *Karori.* However, most of these officers turned out to be greedy and began taxing the farmers arbitrarily. When news of this corruption reached Akbar he made Todarmal Diwan Ashraf - the highest officer in the goods Department. He was given full authority to rectify the Department.

Todarmal began to punish the erring officers strictly. Many of them were thrown into prison with some even perishing there. Earlier the land used to be measured with hemp ropes - this was tricky as these ropes shrank when wet and stretched out when dry. Thus they never gave the correct measurement. Todarmal had measuring sticks made out of bamboo sticks with iron rings. Thus the whole land was measured. He ordered the Patwaris to measure the areas under their jurisdiction and give it in writing. A copy of the paper was to be sent to the Department. But all this was not enough to fix the tax rates. Some lands produced abundantly while some gave an average yield. Still others were not worth sowing. Todarmal then classified the land into 4 categories.

'Polaj' - were the most fertile lands and could yield 2 crops a year.

'Parti' - were the lands which had to be kept fallow every alternate year, so that it's fertility could be retained.

'Chachar' - were the lands low in fertility and had to be kept fallow for 2-3 years.

'Banjar' - were the lands that could be cultivated only once in five or more years.

After this, the per acre average produce of each type of land was calculated and the land revenue. Todarmal calculated the average of the fluctuating prices of the past 10 years and started the system of payment in cash. The farmers had the option of paying in grain.

Not only this, Todarmal also started the practice of reducing or eliminating land revenue all together during a famine or any other disaster. He also started a system by which farmers got help from the state treasury. This cash help was called *taccawi.*

All this saw Todarmal elevated to a status of God for the farmers and the government officials who used to burden them feared him like the Devil himself.

Todarmal wanted Hindu and Muslims alike to work as government officials, so he started preparing the tax accounts in Persian. Now Hindus too had to study the Persian language. As a result they too began to be appointed as high officials in government services.

In those days it was difficult to separate religion from politics, but Todarmal gave his attention to this too. He did not approve of the fact that Hindus were taxed for following their religion. He called Akbar's attention to this and had the 'Jazziya' tax abolished.

Todarmal was a staunch Hindu and never hid that fact. Until he finished his daily Puja, he never started on any work. He agreed, though, that one must move with the times. At home he wore the kurta and dhoti, but at court he dressed in *pajama* and *choga as* it was the rule of the Turks. Like them he too took part in horse racing. He said that by learning their language or by dressing like them a Hindu could not become a Turk. Hindus could participate in the Mughal govt. even while upholding their own religion. Akbar's new religion Din - e - Ilahi had been accepted by staunch Muslims like Abul Fazal and equally staunch Hindus like Birbal. Todarmal however, did not accept this religion.

Todarmal was not only a good administrator but a good Commander-in-chief too. Akbar had sent him to a number of battles where, before him other chiefs had failed. Bengal being far from the capital, often broke out into revolts. Finally Akbar sent Todarmal who struggled for four years before bringing peace to Bengal. Similarly, in Gujarat he defeated Sultan Zafar to bring peace to that region.

Todarmal also strengthened Akbar's army of soldiers. In those days the Mansabdari system was prevalent. The Mansabdar did not pay taxes and received a fixed salary. In return he maintained a cavalry and some foot soldiers. However, this did not happen and when an emergency arose, they hired horses from elsewhere to complete the numbers. Todarmal started the system of branding the horses and maintaining a register of all the Mansabdars and soldiers.

The major wars that Akbar had to face were against the Afghans and Pathans in the Syat valley. He was keen to win over Kashmir

but before that he had to win over the valley. He sent his most able general Zain Khan to the valley. Nothing that Zain Khan did could make him victorious and he called for more soldiers. Akbar then sent Birbal along with 16,000 soldiers. More than half the soldiers along with Birbal were killed. Akbar then sent Todarmal to win over this State. He defeated them completely and the reason for his victory was his good management. It is true that because of the Mansabdari system he could not manage the soldiers as he would have liked to. However he tried to make the best arrangements of weapons, and food for the soldiers who were in the battle field. According to him getting together an army was a big job, but an even bigger job was to arrange for their food.

When Todarmal became old and there was peace all over the land, he pleaded with Akbar that he would like to spend his last days singing the praise of God in Hardwar. Akbar granted his plea and he started out. Just then he received a second message from the Emperor in which was written that the true praise of God was through service to Man. Akbar wanted Todarmal to help him in State affairs for some more time. Todarmal immediately returned but after barely 11 days he was murdered by a person from his own community. Todarmal had punished this man for some crime in the past. Thus in 1589, a great life ended.

Akbar had great faith in Todarmal. Before Todarmal's death in 1589 when Akbar had gone to Kashmir for a few days, he had left the management of the then capital-Lahore in Todarmal's hands. Todarmal was the most efficient administrator in Akbar's court. Even his opponents like Abul Fazal, could not stop praising his bravery and efficiency in State affairs.

The secret to Todarmal's success was that he always kept the welfare of the people his priority and strictly followed all rules and regulations. Although a staunch Hindu, he rose to the highest ranks in a Muslim empire. That, along with his personality helped him prove that in running of a state, a person's ability, not his caste or creed mattered. He was Akbar's seniormost administrator and that is how he would be remembered forever in the History of India.

MAHARANA PRATAP

—Dhanesh Malik

THIS is a story of Rajasthan's grandeur, Mewar's glory and pride of Chittor. That very Chittor where legends were born - the devotee of God-Meera, the loyal servant-Panna, and the great patriot— Rana Pratap.

What a blessed moment for Mewar and an unforgettable one for India was 31st May 1539 - for this was the day that Pratap was born. He was son to Uday Singh and a grandson to Rana Sanga of Udaipur.

Maharana Pratap had a very attractive personality. He was tall and well built with large eyes and full face. Broad chested, with long hands and a thick moustache, he was of a wheatish complexion. He did not sport a beard. So intense was his personality that no one could remain unaffected by it. The bold blood of Rana Sanga ran through his veins and his heart swelled with patriotism.

Rana Sanga had come into conflict with Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire. Maharana Pratap pestered even a strong ruler like Akbar. Unfortunately his father Uday Singh turned out to be very self indulgent. He married 18 times and sired 24 sons. Noteworthy amongst all of them were Pratap Singh, Jagmal and Shakti Singh. Just before his death Uday Singh declared Jagmal his heir and not Pratap, his eldest son. Jagmal was the son of his favourite queen Bhatyani and he too self-indulgent.

During Uday Singh's reign itself, Akbar had taken hold of Shivpur, Kota and Chittor forts. Rajputs could no longer tolerate the further decline of Mewar. Under the leadership of Chandawat Krishanji they asked, "How can such a self-indulgent king serve the country. He is deaf to the cries of the people, he is blind to the dismal conditions all around. He is also a coward who cannot protect his country. He does not understand that a king should be the keeper and protector of his people, not their tormentor." People of Mewar were fed up of the misrule and injustice.

People now looked to Pratap to lead them. Since childhood he had heard stories of Rana Sanga and of Padmini's sacrifice at the pyre. He himself had witnessed the plight of Chittor and heard the glorious stories of India. He was of the firm belief that the most important duty for Rajputs was to sacrifice their lives for the country.

Rana vowed to take back Chittor. Sword fighting Archery and Horse racing were Rana Pratap's childhood sports. He was well versed in the art of warfare too. Only a Rana with such qualities and beliefs was the ideal Maharana.

19 miles north-west of Udaipur was Gonguda. Here on 3rd March, 1572, Pratap was enthroned. He took an oath for redemption of regain Chittor and for that sacrifice was the road to success. Even if the oceans were to leave its shores, the Himalayas its pride and the sun its radience, Pratap would not retract from his vows. Even if it meant losing his life. He vowed "Untill Chittor is won back I shall not eat in gold or silver plates, not sleep on a soft bed, not stay in the palace, not celebrate any festivals, not proclaim my glory in the battle fields, nor twist my moustache in pride."

History is witness to Rana treating the hills of Mewar his fort and the caves there his palace. He ate off plates made of leaves, drank from the pond, slept on a stone pillow, had the moonlight as his lamp and the sky as his roof. Thus he spent his whole life in protecting the pride and dignity of country, religion and community.

It is said that after winning the battle at Sholapur, Akbar's Commander-in-chief, Man Singh thought —"Let me go and meet Rana Pratap. Maybe, I can influence him to be on friendly terms with Akbar".

Having received Man Singh's message, Pratap went to the Udaysagar Jheel (lake) to meet him. Historians are of the view that Man Singh tried to convince Pratap. "Please try to understand. Akbar is a well-wisher of the Hindus. He has married according to the Hindu rites and rituals. He has stopped the Jaziya, a levy imposed on non-muslims. He is trying to ban cow slaughter. In his court there is the great mathematician Todarmal, a poet like Prithvi

Singh and a knowledgeable person like Birbal. Staying close to Hindu scholars them he has become very much a Hindu. I feel he must have been a Hindu in his past life, therefore he is worthy of your friendship. Besides enmity with him can only bring about your downfall."

Hearing this Rana said — "Whatever the case I shall not shift from my stand. I do not understand this argument of denouncing our ancient glory."

Rana Pratap's words left him speechless but Man Singh accepted Rana's invitation for a meal.

The food was served with great show in bowls of silver and gold. When he arrived, Man Singh was surprised to see only Pratap's son waiting to welcome him. He asked — "Will the Rana not take food with me?"

Amar Singh replied — "He has a headache therefore he cannot come."

"I understand to some extent why he had this sudden headache", Man Singh said gravely.

"He is helpless", said Amar Singh.

"Then I too am helpless", replied Man Singh

Upon this the Rana sent a message, clearly saying - Those who dine with the Mughals and give their daughter in marriage to them, I consider eating with them an insult to me and my family.

To show that he did not disrespect the food, Man Singh picked up two grains of rice and placed them in his turban. While leaving, he said "Pratap, for the sake of your dignity I sacrificed mine. Now if I do not knock off your arrogance I am not Man Singh".

To this Pratap replied "Next time I shall meet you at the battlefield with my sword."

However, Historians do not consider this to be authentic. They say that such exaggerated description found in Todd's tales is not true by historic facts. This should be considered as one of the many legends that have built up around Rana Pratap down the ages.

Meanwhile, another incident took place. In spring during the *'Ahruya'* festival Maharana and Shaktisingh went for hunting. Both of them attacked a dangerous wild boar. Then began an argument. Pratap said "The first arrow was mine."

Shaktisingh said "The boar died with my arrow, your claim is totally false."

Pratap roared "Look Shaktisingh, do not try to add fuel to the fire."

Shaktisingh answered "If Pratap is proud of his glory, then Shaktisingh is proud of his strength."

The swords came out of the scabbards. Just then a priest came by. Though he tried his best to stop them, Shaktisingh said "Once the sword has been unsheathed, it does not go back without tasting blood."

The swords clashed. The priest came between them and his sacrifice satiated the thirst of the swords. The conflict came to an end. Rana said to Shaktisingh "You are responsible for the death of this scholar. I would have condemned you to death, but this time I forgive you. Go! Immediately leave the boundaries of the kingdom of Mewar."

Shaktisingh answered "Forgive? This forgiveness is very bitter Pratap! Remember, some day when you are in a helpless situation this will be returned to you." So saying, Shaktisingh left for Delhi.

By this, one should not feel that Pratap was not large hearted. Here is a tale of his large heartedness. It is said that one day in order to test his sword's sharpness, Uday Singh said "Run my sword on a thread." Five year old Shakti Singh could not bear to hear this. He said, "How can a thread be used to test a sword's sharpness. I will test its sharpness just now."

Taking the sword he cut-off his finger. Uday Singh took this as an insult to himself and a show of the boy's impudence. He immediately ordered the boy to be beheaded. Everyone present was shocked. Shaktisingh bowed his head. Salumbradeep did not have a son. He asked for a boon "Maharaj! Many a times, you

had wanted to give me something as a token of appreciation. I have never taken anything. Grant me the child today."

After a few years, when a son was born to him, Shaktisingh became a burden. Rana's large heartedness came to the forefront. Maharana called Shaktisingh and said to Salumbradeep "Return Pratap's brother to him."

Seing Man Singh humiliated and Shaktisingh exiled, Akbar wanted to humiliate Rana Pratap. Under Man Singh's command the Mughal and Rajput armies attacked Mewar. Rana had just a handful of soldiers. On 18 June 1576 in extreme hot weather, there raged a fierce battle in Haldighati. The Rajput's put up a tough fight against the Mughals.

During this war, Rana's brave horse Chetak fiercely attacked Man Singh's elephant. As soon as his legs hit the elephant's forehead, Maharana attacked Man Singh with his spear.

Man Singh fell forward in his *howdah* and his elephant ran away with him. Chetak had been injured by a blow from the elephant's trunk. As Maharana was returing some Mughuls gave a chase. Shaktisingh saw this. His brotherly love could not bear to see this and instantly, he attacked the two and slaughtered them. He wanted to call Mewar his mother and Pratap longed to hear 'brother' from him. The two separated hearts came together. About four miles from Haldighati, while crossing a small bridge near Balicha village, Chetak fell down. It is said that Pratap built a memorial on that spot in memory of his beloved Chetak. The original one is no longer there, but in its place stands a clay model of a horseman. Shaktisingh, being with the Mughals yet killing two Mughul soldiers to help Pratap may be imbued with dramatic elements but remains unbelievable. If in this battle Shaktisingh had been a part of the main army, surely Abul Fazal and the other Muslim Historians would have named him along with other Rajputs.

Together with Shaktisingh, Rana became a bitter enemy of the Mughuls. The battle of Haldighati came to an end. Rana pitched his tent on the Sodha Hill. While the war was raging, with little hope of winning, Rana had ordered all the crops to be burnt and

destroyed. This was to prevent the enemies from feeding themselves and becoming stronger.

Now the irony was that the Pratap's remaining army was dying of hunger. Even the Rana was eating bread made of grass. Having left the palace and all his luxuries, they were not even fated to eat those grass breads. Just as Maharani Prabhamayi gave her younger daughter a piece of bread, a wild cat snatched it away. The hungry child could bear it no longer. She cried out "I am hungry, give me food."

Pratap was also humane, he could not stop his tears. He was after all, a father whose heart beat with love and tenderness. Immediately he wrote a letter seeking place to Akbar "I am a beggar in the forest, but what have my innocent children done to deserve this? Why should they wander hungry and thirsty in the jungles?"

The letter reached Akbar. His dreams had come true.

Prithviraj was a poet at Akbar's court. When he received Pratap's letter he was stunned. He could not bear to see the mighty Himalayas bent to the earth and form an alliance with Akbar. He could not bear to see the pride of Rajasthan thus destroyed. He thought out a plan and said "Your Majesty, I do not believe that this letter was written by Pratap. This could be a move of the enemy. I know his writing very well. This is not his signature."

Akbar's dreams were shattered. Prithviraj vowed "With my poem I shall inspire Pratap and save him from sinking."

A letter was sent to Pratap. He realized his mistake.

He said to himself "Prithvi I am grateful to you for guiding me." He sent a message "Prithvi! The next reply to your letter shall be not by a pen but by a sword."

Patriotism rose above a father's love for the child. The great organizer Maharana, once more gathered together the Bhils and gave them military training. Bhama Shah, the Minister of Mewar offered his entire life's savings at the feet of Rana. Shaktisingh too sent a large amount to help Rana. Amar Singh was old enough

now to go forth in the battle. A large number of chieftans came forward with soldiers and wealth to help Maharana Pratap.

Another incident from those days shows yet another aspect of Pratap's character. Another example of his generosity as follows:

Maharana Pratap's son Amar Singh attacked the camp of Rahim Khankhana. He slaughtered the Mughul soldiers who were intoxicated. This was a reply to their own policies of war. On his return Amar Singh brought back not only weapons but also Rahim's wife Zeenat as captive. When Pratap came to know of this, he roared in anger "Amar! It would have been better if you had died before this. Has your sense of justice left you? Are you not ashamed to capture a woman? Speak out! Why are you quiet?"

Amar replied "No doubt I have acted wrongly. But I have done this to teach the Mughals a lesson. They behave so badly with our wives and daughters. Now they too shall realize the pain and hurt of losing one's daughter and wife."

Pratap ordered that Zeenat be returned to Rahim with full respect.

After this battles raged one after the other. Soon Maharana captured three forts. However, he could not win back Chittor, Ajmer and Mandalgarh. On 19 January 1597, at the age of 57, the Maharana breathed his last at the village of Chawand. Situated in the south of Udaipur, this village still has the tomb built in his memory.

Many brave warriors and soldiers were born amidst the Rajputs, a number of administrators too, but none as wise, brave, patriotic and proud as Pratap. In the second half of the 16th century, Akbar's empire was one of the most powerful in the world. What did Rana Pratap have in order to confront such a powerful ruler as Akbar? He neither had a large empire, nor a capital. A number of Rajputs around him, even his own brother had accepted the protection of the Mughals. The state treasury was empty. Apart from a handful of loyal followers, no one was willing to help him. He had very few weapons and even those were nothing compared to the ones that Akbar's soldiers had. Despite all that, Rana Pratap gave Akbar

a very difficult time. Under no circumstances did he bow before the Mughals. Truly, there are few such shining examples of brave men in any country of the world. Blessed is the mother who gave birth to such a son and blessed is the country in which he was born.

TANSEN

—Dilip Chandra Bedi

TANSEN is one of the most famous singers India has ever had. His ancestors migrated from Lahore (Punjab) and settled in Delhi and Gwalior.

Tansen was born in 1506* in the Behat village, 7 miles away from Gwalior. His father Makarand Pandey was also called Mishraji. Tansen was also called by various names like Ramtanu, Trilochan, Tanna Mishra, Tansukh etc. Later he became famous as Ataali Khan and Miyan Tansen. His uncle, Baba Ramdas, a great singer and poet himself, was a student of Swami Haridasji of Brindavan. Young Tansen stayed with his uncle and learnt singing at Gwalior. Ramdasji was friendly with Pir Ghaus Mohamad who was also a lover of music. He knew about Swami Haridasji and realizing young Tansukh's talent advised Ramdasji to send the boy to Brindavan. For the next 12 years he was tutored in vocal music and theory by Nad (Master of Sounds) Brahmayogi Swami Haridasji.

Swami Haridasji was the greatest singer of his times and a great devotee of Krishna. He had an ashram in Brindavan where he taught classical musical to local talented disciples.

After 12 years of continuous training, Tansen took leave of his teacher and set out to visit all the famous centres of music. Having met many great musicians he finally reached Rewa, the capital of Bundelkhand in spring. Maharaj Adhiraj Ramchandra was a great devotee of Swami Haridasji. At the time when Tansen went to meet him at the palace, Maharaj Adhiraj was at his prayers. The gatekeeper hesitated to announce the arrival of Tansen. Tansen went behind the palace, sat in the flower garden and began to sing one of his guru's compositions. *"Naad gar gar sughar banko hi killow?* - a Dhrupad in *raag Hindol.* As soon as the strains of his voice fell upon his ears, Maharaj Adhiraj ran to the

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*Some people believe that he was born in 1532 or 1520 in the Baghelvansh family.

garden - barefoot, like a parched deer. The gatekeeper was confused. Maharaj Adhiraj called Tansen his 'dear friend' and embraced him. His happiness knew no bounds, his eyes filled with tears of joy. Both recalled the days they spent together in Haridasji's ashram in Brindavan. Tansukh was welcomed to the palace with respect. Royal palace appeared to have changed into a palace of music. Tansen agreed to make Rewa his centre, because of Maharaj Adhiraj's insistence. He stayed peacefully and very happily till the age of 50. Even with such honour and luxury, Tansen did not slacken his practice of music. Due to his service to Swami Haridas, he had also become a great devotee of God. He would enthrall the devotees at the temple with his songs. He had composed many Dhrupads based on chants.

Although he stayed in Rewa till the age of 50, word of his wonderful voice had spread far and wide. When Akbar heard his praises, he wrote to the ruler of Rewa - 'a wonderfully talented singer such as Tansen has been in your court till the age of 50. You have heard his beautiful voice for many years. Such a great singer befits to be in the court of the Emperor. Surely you could send Tansen to me!'

This letter seemed to strike Tansen and Maharaj Adhiraj like a bolt of lightning. To one, who despite being a ruler, thought of an artist as a 'dear friend', in whose ashram he has devoted his music till the age of 50, whose subjects respected the artist as someone sent by God, whose music they treated as floral tributes to God, to be separated from such a one may be possible for some stone hearted person, but not for an artist. Everyone who heard the news was plunged into sadness. The capital of Bundelkhand seemed to be enveloped in a pall of mourning. Tansen suddenly took ill, and this news spread like wild fire throughout the capital. The court physician (*Rajvaidya*) sent back Akbar's messenger with all due respect and with a message that said, "Tansen has been unwell for sometime. I am looking after him. As soon as he is better the king of Rewa shall send him to Agra."

The messenger reached Agra and narrated not only the message sent by the king of Rewa but also the sad state of all his subjects.

A king's desire to have something cannot be easily subdued. Akbar on the advice of his clever minister Birbal, sent a message saying, 'the Emperor and all his courtiers are looking forward enthusiastically to hear Tansen sing. We hope, that he has recovered from his illness. If he is not completely cured, I am sure the court physician of Agra would take care. I understand that the king of Rewa and his subjects love Tansen a lot. He shall have full freedom to travel to Rewa. He should feel proud to be called the court singer of India's Emperor. It is befitting for the king of Rewa to add to the splendour of the Emperor's court.'

Having read this order, Maharaj Adhiraj held a lengthy discussion with his ministers. To save the king and subjects from any further trouble, Tansen agreed to go to Agra.

It is said that the scene during Tansen's departure was heart breaking. The king of Bundelkhand and all the people of the capital were crying as if they had gathered to bid farewill to a dear daughter after her marriage. Seated in his palanquin *(palki)* Tansen could not bear to see this and looked away. After sometime they stopped for a while. Tansen looked out, and what did he see? - the king of Rewa, the lover of music was lending his right shoulder along with the other palanquin bearers. Tansen jumped out and requested the king to return to the palace, promising him, "Maharaj Adhiraj has lent my palanquin his right shoulder and bestowed untold honour on me .... I shall never salute any Emperor with my right hand."

When they reached Fatehpur Sikri, a servile military officer, complained to Akbar about Tansen's vow. When Tansen saluted Akbar with his left hand instead of right, Akbar smiled and said, "Tansen is new, but he is bright. Very soon he shall learn the ways of the Emperor's court. Let the music begin!"

An officer came forth and asked Tansen to sit on the floor and sing. Tansen took this as disrespect towards himself and an insult to music. Reluctantly he started to sing a dhrupad. The last verse went thus - "Tansen says 'Listen oh Emperor Akbar' sing the first raag in Bhairav."

All the courtiers swayed to the beautiful and soulful voice. After

the gathering broke up Tansen went back to his quarters and lay down feigning illness. The very next day, news of his illness spread all over. One day, Birbal came, representing Akbar and full of sympathy asked the reason for his illness. To which Tansen replied, "I'm not happy here, so my health is failing. The king of Rewa called me his friend and gave me a high position in his court. Sitting on floor and singing in court, was not only an insult to me but also a great disrespect to the splendid art of music. For God's sake send me away from here."

Hearing this, Birbal, said, "Akbar is a great connoisseur. He is wonderstruck by your singing and capacity to retain interest in the audience. An artist like you should stay in the capital. Your wonderful singing is a gift of God. It is with god's grace that Akbar is the Emperor of India. I shall request him to make you one of the gems in his court. He always listens to me, and he is very generous."

On Birbal's request Akbar agreed to make Tansen one of the 'gems' in his court - on the condition that Tansen would sing in court on his (Akbar's) birthday.

As soon as this news spread, Tansen's guru fellows (students of the same guru), Chand Khan (previously known as Somnath), Suraj Khan (previously Pandit Diwakar) and many other artists, turned green with jealousy. Through Sheikh Afzal and some other ministers, they made Akbar agree that at court, if Tansen could defeat Chand Khan or Suraj Khan in a competition, then only would he be given the status of a 'gem'. In addition he would be given rich rewards.

On the occasion of Akbar's birthday there were three days of continuous celebrations. Chand Khan and Suraj Khan announced in the court that Tansen should sing some *raag* that the two brothers could not sing.

In reply, Tansen softly said, "Both these artists are disciples of my own guru Haridasji who was impartial in his teachings. If they know more than me then let them sing any *raag* which I cannot."

Both brothers became pale on hearing this. Then seating himself before the court, Tansen sang one or two *raags* which none of them remembered. Chand Khan and his supporters said these

were *raags* made up by him. Tansen, however silenced everyone by his explanation that they were based on what the ancient *rishis* had said. In court Tansen was presented with the title of 'Navratna' and one lakh mudras (gold coins). Tansen distributed these coins among the poor of Agra. When Birbal asked the reason he replied, "The Emperor has never given such a huge amount to any artist nor has any artist donated such a huge amount."

In Akbar's court the most influential artist was Thakur Sanmukhsinghji - a veena player. Because of the sweetness of his veena recital, he had been nicknamed Misri (sugar) Singh. After being defeated by Tansen the other artists began to influence him against him and he too finally joined them. One day while playing at Akbar's court, he invited Tansen to compete with him. Tansen replied by singing out the tune he had played. Thakurji got agitated and gave vent with some unpleasant words. Akbar asked him to leave the court. After sometime, in order to bring them together, Akbar and Birbal fixed a marriage alliance between the two families.

The first person to compose a *khayal* was a descendent of Sadarangi Thakur Misrisingh. Abul Fazal had written in the *Ain-e-Akbari* that there were 36 artists who hailed not only from India, but also from Iran, Turkey, Arabia and two other countries. Tansen, however was the brightest of all. Whoever confronted him was defeated in the end. Eveyone was of the opinion that in the past one thousand years he was the most wonderful singer to be born. Jahangir too has mentioned this in his book, *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri.*

Once Akbar asked Tansen, "Who could be a better singer than you?"

Tansen replied, "My guru Swami Haridasji is the best singer." Akbar expressed a desire to hear Swami Haridasji but Tansen replied, "My guru does not sing at any king's court. He only sings before the image of Krishna."

Once while travelling from Agra to Delhi, Akbar stopped at Brindavan on the way. Together with Tansen and dressed as ordinary folks they went to Swamiji's ashram in time for the evening prayers. He was singing Dhrupad in raag Kalyan - *'tu hi*

bhaj re man Krishna, vasudev paddmanath param purush parmeshwar narayan' (sing the name of Krishna, He is the greatest of mankind and also the gods). Tansen and Akbar sat outside to listen to his singing. When it ended Akbar continued to sit with closed eyes. Swamiji asked Tansen to take the king inside the ashram. Both were struck by his understanding. On a polite request from Akbar and Tansen, Swamji started to sing. Tansen accompanied him on the Tambura (a small percussion instrument).

After bidding farewell, Akbar asked Tansen in a light mood, "When compared to Swamiji's voice, your voice sounds pale. Why?"

Tansen replied, "I sing to get appreciation from the people and Swamiji sings to please God."

Tansen received great honour at Akbar's court and his fame spread far and wide, but the peace he had found at Rewa eluded him. After the death of his wife he prepared to renounce everything, and go to Brindavan, but Birbal persuaded him to stay back.

For various reasons Tansen had to change his religion, but this did not make any difference to his music.

He passed away in 1589* and according to his wishes he was buried in Gwalior, next to the tomb of Pir Ghaus Mohamad Saheb.

Tansen's, contemporary was another great singer - Surdas or Baiju Bawra, also called as Baijanath. Both were good friends. Tansen wrote the following lines in praise of Surdas - *"Kidhon sur ko sar laagyo, kidhon sur ki peer. Kidhon sur ko pad gayo, tan man dhunat shareer"* (where should I say is the tune? In the head, on the feet. It is all over the body).

In response, Surdas praised Tansen's singing thus - *"Vidhna us jiya jaanke, sheshahun diye na kaan. Dhara meru sub dolte, Tansen ki taan"* (God has not given ears to Sheshnag deliberately otherwise the entire earth, the skies too reverberate with the songs of Tansen).

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* Some people consider it 1585 or 1588.

CHAND BIBI

—Ramesh Chandra 'Prem'

Chand bibi was so clever, bold and brave that if instead of Chand Bibi, she was called Chand Sultana, it would not be an exaggeration. Few acts of valour can compare with the brave confrontation that she had with Akbar's large army.

In 1591, Akbar had planned to conquer the entire south. At that time the four great kingdoms in the South were - Ahmednagar, Khandesh, Bijapur and Golconda. Akbar sent his messengers to all four of them. They asked the four rulers to accept Akbar's supremacy.

The rulers of Ahmednagar, Golconda and Bijapur were very annoyed and refused to accept Akbar's terms; but the ruler of Khandesh was a weakling. He could not stand up to the military force of the Mughals. He quickly gave himself up before Akbar.

When Akbar heard that three kingdoms of the south had refused to accept his terms, he sent his son, Murad, to conquer them. In 1595 Murad's army surrounded Ahmednagar on all sides.

Ahmednagar was virtually ruled by Chand Bibi as she was the only surviving descendent to the throne.

She was the daughter of Hussein Nizam Shah and the wife of Ali Adil Shah. Not only was she a refined lady from a high class family, but also intelligent and well versed in matters of warfare and administration. For these reasons she was called 'Nadirat-ul-Zamani' (the one who has no comparison in her times). Her blood boiled in anger to see her kingdom slip away from her hands. Donning a burkha and clutching a sword she jumped into the battlefield.

Unfortunately, Ahmednagar at that time was divided between the two groups of Shias and Sunnis. A group of traitors sent word to Murad that they would help him. This worsened the situation but Chand Bibi did not lose hope. She called together all her Amirs

and very cleverly pacified them. They realized their mistake and repented their promise to Murad. All the people decided that Chand Bibi should take over as ruler and guard the fort while they make every effort to protect Ahmednagar.

Chand Bibi was not the one to sit quietly. Her heart swelled with patriotism and anyhow she wanted to defeat the enemy. She began to collect food and other equipments for the battle. She kept all the Amirs of her court happy and satisfied with her shrewdness and statesmanship. She placed her soldiers at such strategic points around the fort that security around the entire Ahmednagar was strengthened.

Thereafter, she made Bahadur Shah, son of Bahadur Shah a puppet ruler on the throne. She made an alliance with Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur. Thus she prepared herself in every way.

In those days, whoever saw the army of Ahmednagar, the stamp of Chand Bibi's patriotism was seen on it. Like any brave soldier she too donned armour and armed with sword and shield stepped in front of the enemy. Her bravery surprised many a great soldier, as she led her soldiers in battle. Chand Bibi gave such an inspiring speech in the battlefield that even the most coward person did not hesitate to remain in the back.

Chand Bibi had heard a lot of legends about Rajput women. She had heard that during a battle, many a queen would come before the soldiers and give fiery speeches to inspire them. They would fill the soldiers with excitement and say, "Go forth! And fight bravely for your country" Chand Bibi, however, went one step ahead. She gathered the soldiers around her and said, "This is a question of all our respect and freedom. Come with me and let us fight bravely for the country."

Under such a situation, who would not support Chand Bibi? Which soldier would go back after seeing her go forth like Goddess Durga in battle? Who would even think of trying to save himself after hearing the call of the brave Chand Bibi?

The soft and delicate Chand Bibi went ahead with her army and attacked Murad's army like a falcon. The enemy was surprised

to see a bold and brave woman stand before them with a weapon in her hands. Such art of warfare, such bravery they had not witnessed before, and that too from a woman who had never ventured beyond the four walls of the palace; one who was brought up to be as delicate as a flower.

The battle continued for many days. One day Murad's soldiers dug a tunnel and blew up one of the walls of Chand Bibi's fort. Chaos prevailed and everyone tried to run away. But blessed be Chand Bibi's bravery!! The lion-hearted woman threw off her burkha and snatching up a shining sword, stood at the main gate of the fort. Chand Bibi had forseen this day, and had therefore stored some essential things like wooden planks and bamboos. She herself came and stood on the broken wall of the fort. Tempting some with large sums of money and putting fear into others she organized the work so well that all the men and women began to work together. Very soon the wall was rebuilt and the canons put atop it.

If Murad's army attacked the workers, there would be a volley of cannon firing to push them back.

In the evening when Murad's army returned to their camp, Chand Bibi and thousands of her workers came and stood near the wall. Chand Bibi rode on a horse and with fire bands burning all around, work to build the wall carried on in full swing.

Chand Bibi kept distributing fist full of coins to the workers and they worked with renewed vigour.

The next day when the enemy marched up they saw before them a three yard wide and fifty yard high wall. All the soldiers were greatly surprised but could not help praising her in their minds.

Once during this battle there was no gunpowder left with Chand Bibi. All the roads were closed and there was no hope of help from anywhere. Chand Bibi made gold and silver cannon balls and renewed her attacks on Murad's army.

Finally, her bravery had its desired effect - Murad's army retracted. Ahmednagar was now completely safe.

Murad realized that it was futile to fight against Chand Bibi, so made a pact with her. According to this, Chand Bibi agreed to hand over the Berar region to Akbar.

For five years after this Akbar did not dare to attack Ahmednagar. However, thereafter, Akbar's youngest son won it over. He won because Chand Bibi was not there to confront him. Before this attack the *Amirs* and chieftans had either murdered her or forced her to consume poison. Thus, ended the life of a good and brave *Begum* (queen). As long as she lived she kept kindling the flame of patriotism even in the hearts of the most coward of men - transforming them to brave patriots. Anyone who saw her fall upon her enemies like a swooping falcon could never forget her. Like other warriors, not only did she plan the wars, but also took part in them actively.

Chand Bibi was feared by her enemies. Not only was she equal to men, but often surpassed them in boldness and bravery.

Akbar too, had started respecting her in his mind and for this reason, the first thing he did after conquering Ahmednagar was to look for Chand Bibi's killers. He did not rest till he killed each one of them.

Chand Bibi sacrificed her life and has set such an example that no true patriot can ever forget it.

SAMARTH SWAMI RAMDAS

—Gargi Gupta

SAMARTH Swami Ramdaswas Shivaji's *guru.* He was born in 1608, in the Jamb village in Ambar. Ambar was in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. His real name was Narayan. In his childhood Ramdas was naughty and mischievous. He spend all this time in climbing trees, terraces and playing pranks.

His father was Suryaji Pant and his mother Ranubai. They were a very religious couple. For a long time they did not have any child. This used to worry them a lot. Once while they were performing a *yagya* Ranubai had a dream, in which she was told about bearing two sons. It came true. The younger son was Narayan.

After he grew up his name was changed to Ramdas. When he was 10 years old his mother wanted him to get married. He agreed and with great show the marriage ceremonies began. As the *Panigrahan* (the ritual in which the bride's father gives her hand to the groom) began, the Brahman priests chanted *"Shubh Mangal Savdhan,"* meaning "Your feet will now be chained with family bonds, be careful." Ramdas heard this and thought to himself "I stay so careful. What more do they want from me?"

With these thoughts in mind, Ramdas ran away from there. A number of people chased him but in vain. He then started to stay in Takli village of Panchwati. Every day he would go down to bath in the Godavari river. Often he continued to stand and chant in the waters till mid day - unaware of the fish biting him. For his meals he went about begging. Thus he spent the next 11 years of his life.

After that, he went to visit various centres of pilgrimage. He met many holy men and gained knowledge from them. During this time he carefully studied the economic situation of the country. One day he got the news that his mother had become blind as a result of continuous crying after he had left. He immediately left

to meet his mother. Seing him return home after so many years she was extremely happy but at the same time felt sad because she could not see him. She said, "Narayan, my son! How tall are you now? I cannot see you as my eyes have lost their sight."

Unhappy at his mother's sadness, Ramdas fell at her feet.

Ramdas wandered about organizing the society, giving religious talks. Leaving a few able disciples to take care of the *Mutt* (organization), he moved on to the next destination. Day by day the number of his disciples increased and so also his fame. So much so that great men from all over India came to visit him.

Not only was Ramdas a great soul but also a scholar poet and politician. *Dasbodh,* written by him, is a teasure trove of knowledge. It may be considered an encyclopedia in which all the art of rites and rituals have been written down. Apart from this he had written many books. He had also written a *Ramayana* which is twice as long as Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas.*

Ramdas taught that in the eyes of God all men are equal. He only has appetite for devotion. A person should give up selfishness and serve the society in some way or the other.

Swami Ramdas spent his entire life serving others. His life was a living example of sacrifice and service.

Once, when a number of guests arrived at Swamiji's ashram, they ran short of food. Ramdasji wrote a few verses in Marathi and gave it to his disciples. They went about singing them and brought back some alms.

That day they got so much that could feed a thousand guests. In Maharashtra his verses are still sung by beggars.

His heart was as soft as a flower and strong as a flash of lightning. When faced with duty he did not think of anything else. He met Shivaji in 1659. At first he avoided him, but when Shivaji took a vow to fast until Ramdas agreed to meet him, Swamiji relented. This was his way of testing Shivaji. He loved Shivaji a great deal but even then Swami Ramdas often put him on test.

Since childhood Ramdasji was inclined towards renunciation. Seeing his strange abilities, other holy men began to call him *Samarth* (able). Once when he stood outside the Satara fort and called out "Jai Jai Sri Raghuveer Samarth" and begged for alms, Shivaji gave his entire kingdom to him.

Whatever Guru Samarth said was written down by his disciples. His holy teachings have been collected in about 20 volumes. Here are a few extracts—

1. A good person does not get angry at petty things. He does not allow his body to become lazy. He never stops trying and does not hesitate to face hardships.

2. He who cannot control his own mind is not a *Guru,* but will remain a greedy beggar in search of a few disciples.

3. A student should not be happy by birth. His heart should feel the sorrow of others. One who in sad with the sorrows of the world is entiteled for sumncem bonum of life.

4. The true knowledge is that of Self-knowledge. Only that, by which a person recognizes his Self is the true knowledge.

5. This world is *'maya'* - an illusion, but Brahma is the truth. Maya may fall, but Brahma does not. Maya can change and get distorted, but not Brahma.

6. A fickle minded person does not understand anything even if he is attentive. Even ears do not help him to hear, nor does knowledge help him to understand the *saar-asaar* (essence and non-essence). If his mind does at all manage to calm down, he gets enveloped in a haze of laziness.

7. Just as a man attains freedom if he can break away from the unrealistic world dreams, a person who gets true knowledge attains *moksha* (enlightenment). Just as an individual on waking up, is freed from the clutches of dream so he attains *moksha* on getting true knowledge. As soon as the darkness of ignorance comes to an end, sorrows out of resolve come to an end.

8. A sadhu (saint) does not get angry, nor does he have greed. Sorrow is not for him. He is fearless. He does not speak harshly. He does not give much importance to prestige and insults.

The death of Shivaji left him in deep sorrow. He stopped going out and locked himself in his cell and devoted his time in singing *bhajans*.

One year after the death of Shivaji in 1681, Guru Ramdas left his earthly body. He was 73 years old at that time.

Guru Ramdas was not only a great *sanyasi* and religious leader but he also had a unique quality. He had taken a vow to free the country from the chains of slavery and he worked towards this till his last day. Fortunately he got an able student like Shivaji who realized his dreams to a great extent.

SANT TUKARAM

—Hansraj Rahbar

In the 17th century, Maharashtra witnessed a great deal of development . The three most noteworthy personalities are: Shivaji Maharaj, Samarth Guru Ramdas and Tukaram.

Sant Tukaram too was as well known a poet as Kabir, Surdas, Tulsidas and Meera. He was born in 1608 in the village of Dehu. It is said that he was born after numerous prayers by his parents.

His parents brought him up with great love and care. As a young child he was happy playing with his friends and later these very incidents became themes for his 'Abhang' (songs in praise of God). Tukaram's favourite game was Tipari. This game involved 13 or 17 players who were divided into two teams. The one odd player would stand in the middle and sing. Boys of the other team would then walk around him on the left giving a beat with their *tiparis* the (small wooden sticks). The first person to go off the beat would change places with the boy in the centre. The skill of this game lay not only in keeping pace with the sticks but also moving with the same rhythm. It need not be mentioned that this game greatly polished Tukaram's poetic skills.

Thus Tukaram spent his childhood happily playing about. His father used to teach the young boys to read, write and keep accounts. Tukaram was strong in these skills too. He listened carefully to all work-related instructions and very soon began to look after the accounts of the shop and trading business. Seeing this a person told Tukaram's father, Bolhoba, "Your son is very intelligent, he will bring fame to the family name."

Tukaram's father was quite partial to him. In the workplace, he relied more on Tukaram than on his elder son Savji. When he was about 14-15 years old he was married in great style. But after some time, they came to know that his wife was an asthma patient. A trader from Pune agreed to give his daughter and at the age of

16. Tukaram was married again. His first wife's name was Sukhmayee and his second wife was called Jijayee.

Next two year went off spent peacefully. His father died in 1625 and the entire burden of the family fell on Tukaram's shoulders. He took care of his family very well and got his younger brother Kanhoba married in great style. Infact, he spent excessively in this marriage and ran into large debts.

The next year he took his mother on a pilgrimage. This involved a great expense and when he returned his business had virtually closed down. Another person's shop had begun to flourish in the village.

Tukaram was surrounded by problems. Soon after his return the entire country was in the grip of a terrible famine. Tukaram's poverty now knew no bounds. As if to complete his circle of woes, he was declared bankrupt. Now no one even let him come to their door steps. In the midst of all this his first wife, eldest son and mother passed away.

His second wife Jijayee was from a wealthy family. She recalled the comforts of her father's house and grumbled at the discomforts at her in-law's place. She kept berating Tukaram. She wanted him to understand her situation but her bitter words made him stay further away. Her sharp words saddened him and uttering "Bitthal! Bitthal! (Oh God!)" he went to the temple. After being taunted by her he did decide once or twice to do something. He gave his younger brother the responsibility of the shop and himself took up the job of delivering goods to another village. The packs were loaded onto the bullock and Tukaram set forth. On his way he got totally immersed in singing the *kirtans* of Sri Bitthal. After arriving at his destination he saw that the load on one of the bullocks was missing. The sacks must have been stolen or may have fallen off on the way. Instead of getting paid for delivering the goods, he had to pay for the lost goods from his own pocket. At home he was tormented by his wife Jijayee, and outside people made fun of his foolishness and Bitthal Bhajan. He decided that he would never again make such a foolish mistake but now it was difficult for him to get a job.

Finally he managed to collect some money and with that he bought some chillies to sell in the next village. There, a clever businessman cheated him in weight and price. I instead of paying him in cash, did so in gold bracelet. He explained to Tukaram that carrying a gold bracelet would be less dangerous than carrying a lot of cash. Reaching home he found out that it was just a brass bracelet coated with gold. Jijayee berated him with angry and bitter words, but now it was of no use.

After this Jijayee brought Rs. 200 from her father. She bought salt with it and sent Tukaram towards Karnataka to sell it. This time he carried out the transaction very carefully. The salt bought for Rs. 200 was sold by him for Rs. 250. Extremely pleased with himself he turned back singing, "Bitthal! Bitthal!". On his way he met a poor Brahmin. On hearing his sad tale, Tukaram gave him most of what he could. Finally he returned home just as he had left — without a penny. Jijayee, on hearing this, struck her forehead in bitter dissapointment. This time Tukaram felt so sad that he left the house. He walked along the Indrayani river for eight miles till he came to the Maannath hill. He sat on of top it and began to meditate. He thought to himself, "In looking after this family, I have become so entangled in the worldy woes! Everyone is only concerned with the comforts of wealth. No one has any sympathy for me. I'm fed up with all these daily nitty-gritty of life. Therefore, Pandurang, (another name of Krishna) now you are my mother and I seek shelter in you."

It is said that he remained seated there for the next 15 days. Jijayee got agitated and sent his younger brother Kanhoba to look for him. He managed to bring Tukaram home after a lot of persuasion. At home he now stayed but without lifting a finger for any work. First thing in the morning he would pray to Sri Bitthal, then he would recite from the Gyaneshwari or Bhagawat in some secluded corner. At night he would go to any place where praises of Hari were being sung and listen to religious talks and discourses of the devotees.

Jijayee too had stopped saying anything to him. In order to keep him connected to something concerning the household, she engaged him in retrieving the loans people had taken from them. He did

begin to do his work but very soon got fed up. He soon realized that people who owed him money either hid their faces or resorted to lies when he used to visit them. Thus he concluded, "This work is very bad. I am not only forced to think of money instead of God, but I am also pushing people into telling lies. I too have taken a loan of this body from God. Until I return the loan to God. I have no interest to demand back a loan from others."

With these thoughts in mind he gave half the loan papers to his brother and his own half he sunk into river.

Now, Tukaram felt relieved of all household problems. Thereafter, he never touched money. He now spent all his time singing *bhajans* of Sri Bhagawat. In the village there was an ancient temple built in honour of Sri Bhagawat which he repaired with his own hands. Earlier he used to go to other people's places to listen to *bhajans*. Now he began to sing *kirtan* in his own temple. His *kirtans* were full of feelings. He himself composed devotional songs and sang for the devotees. Soon word of his singing spread far and wide. It reached the ears of Rameshwar Bhatt, a Kannada Brahmin considered to be a Mahapandit (very learned person). He accused Tukaram of turning innocent and simple people away from the vedic religion which had been handed down from times immemorial. He insinuated Tukaram of fooling poor people with stories of God's vision. He spoke to the officer of the village and had Tukaram ordered out of the village.

Hearing the order, Tukaram was anguished and ran to Rameshwar Bhatt to ask what his offence was. Panditji Maharaj said, 'Your *abhangas* refer to *shrutis.*'

"You have been born as a 'Shudra' (lowest caste). You do not have the right to explain the 'Shruti'. In doing so you are committing sin upon your own head as well as upon others. Therefore, now onwards, stop composing anymore devotional songs."

Tukaram said, "I write poems on the instruction of Bitthal. You are a Brahim, respected even by the gods. I accept your orders. Henceforth, I shall not write any more devotional songs, but what should I do with the one I have already written?"

He was told, "If you throw them into the river and never

compose such poems in future I shall recommed the withdrawal of the order."

Tukaram returned home and immediately picking up the bag full of his compositions threw it into the river. People who witnessed this act said, "What you have just done is bad. When you threw the loan papers into water you drowned your self-interest, and now you have drowned your heavenly existence! In short you have ruined your present as well as your future."

When Tukaram analysed all this he felt it was true. If there was no self-interest nor God, what was the use of living? He sat on a rock on the banks of that river and began a fast unto death.

For thirteen days, he sat there without having a drop of water. It is said that on the 13th day God came before him and people saw his sack full of manuscripts float up on the river. Some devotees jumped into the water and retrieved the sack. They brought it before Tukaram and said, "Maharaj! arise. Pleased with your devotion, God has saved your songs from sinking into the river. Arise and see it!"

The papers were dry. Tukaram was euphoric with happiness. Thereafter, he started *kirtans* and devotional songs again. When Rameshwar Bhatt got news of this incident he himself became a follower of Tukaram.

Apart from Dehu, Tukaram also sang in other villages. A certain village Patel was a great devotee of Tukaram. Once he left his sick child at home and went to listen to the *kirtans*. At home the child stopped breathing. The angry mother picked up the child and took him to the *kirtan*. It is said that, while singing, Tukaram announced the name of Sri Bitthal. The entire audience began clapping and chanting, "Bithal! Bitthal!". The child began breathing once more. He opened his eyes and joined the congregation in clapping.

A number of such stories about Tukaram are well known. Word of his acts spread far and wide. People would come and take down the lyrics of his songs. To this day they are sung all over Maharashtra.

At the age of 42, Tukaram passed away. The village of Dehu is considered a pilgrimage spot because of him and people from all over gather there for five days on his death anniversary. His devotees have built a temple there. Besides Marathi, Tukaram has composed poems in Hindi too. His Hindi poems have a distinct influence of Marathi and Gujarati.

A notable feature about Tukaram was that due to his love and devotion he had become a loved and respected figure to both friends and foes alike. Rising above the greed, anger and attachment he became a saint who is above worldly involvement in the true sense.

SHIVAJI

—Narainswarup Mathur

EVERY child in India knows the name of Shivaji. Mothers narrate tale of his bravery to their children. India is referred to as 'Bharat Mata' (Mother India) because of the brave sons like Shivaji who were born on her soil. Shivaji was the ideal son who idolised his mother, was an able ruler, unparalleled in bravery and administration. Thus, he is considered to be amongst the greatest men of this world.

Shivaji was born in Maharashtra, the south western State of India. His father was Shahaji Bhonsle and Mother Jijabai. The story of their marriage is amusing. Jijabai's father, Lakhuji Jadhaorao, was the Commander-in-chief of the Ahmednagar kingdom. He was a big feudal lord too. Shahaji's father, Maloji, was a cavalry man in his army. Shahji was a handsome young man and Jadhaorao liked him very much.

Once on the day of Holi, a function of singing and dancing was going on in the 'senapati's (chief commander) house. Young Shahji, just five years old and Jijabai only three, were playing together with the coloured powders of Holi : seeing this, Jadhorao smiled and said, "God has created such a beautiful girl. Shahji is equal to her in beauty. May God bring two equals together."

Maloji took the joke seriously and said that the two children were engaged. Jijabai's mother Girijabai was a bold and intelligent woman. She asked her husband, "Is it true that my daughter will be wed to the son of this poor, wayward and ordinary horse-man? Marriages should take place between equals. How could you do such a foolish thing?"

Two days later Jadhaorao removed Maloji from his services.

Maloji returned to his village and took up farming. Once while keeping watch over his fields at night he saw a huge snake come out of its hole and re-enter after some time. With the hope of

finding a large amount of wealth he dug up that spot. There he discovered seven cooking vessels full of *ashrafis* (gold coins). As a result, within a short time Maloji became a 'senapati' to the Nizam Shahi Sultan. Thus, having come to an equal status with Jadhaorao, Shahji and Jijabai were married amongst much joy and celebrations.

Shivaji was born on 19th February 1630.* At that time his mother was staying at the mountain fort of Shivneiri near Junnar Nagar. A few days prior to his birth, she had prayed for the well being of her child, to the goddess of the fortress, Shiva Bhawani. Thus, she named her son Shiva. Shahaji, at that time, was so much engaged in battles and his own affairs that he rarely stayed at home. He earned an immense amount of wealth and took over large jagirs (land given by the Mughal emperor). It was at this time that he married Tukabai Mohitae and began staying with her in the new jagir. This made Jijabai very unhappy, so taking Shivaji with her, she began to stay in a small jagir near Pune. Thus, till the age of ten, Shivaji saw very little of his father. After that, Shahji separated from Shivaji and his mother.

Shahji appointed one of his trusted employees, Dadoji Konddeo, as Manager of the jagir near Pune, and completely severed his relations with his wife and son. Dadoji had a large house built for them in Pune. It was called 'Lal Mahal'. For Jijabai, life seemed to have lost all its colour and she inclined more and more towards God. This had a great impact on young Shivaji. She narrated stories from the *Ramayana, Mahabharata* and encouraged his brave spirit. Though Shivaji did not read or write, he was too well aware of Indian values and culture. Wherever there was a gathering for religious discourses, Shivaji would go there with great respect and devotion. In this manner, he learnt the true aim of ancient Indian knowledge and religion. Later in life, he based his political and religious principles, his art of warfare as well as administration, on this knowledge.

From a very young age Shivaji learnt to do all his work himself. This enhanced his intellect, working skills and patience in an amazing way, for this reason, there grew in him an intense desire

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* Some historians believe it to be 1627.

for independence. His mother played the most important role in building his character. Dadoji Konddev helped to build him up into a strong and brave youth, skilled in the art of warfare. Samarth Guru Ramdas, completed his character building by guiding him to be an able administrator, a ruler and statesman who abided by religion.

On the western edge of Pune district was a large area which was called 'Mawal' Pradesh at that time. There lived a community called 'Koli' who robbed and looted for a living. Dadaji Konddev brought them into the mainsteam, encouraged them to settle down as agriculturists and raised their standard of living. These very people became Shivaji' troops and climbed to high positions in his army. Dadaji was an able estate manager, organiser and a religious person. Shivaji loved him like his father. Dadaji too considered Shivaji as his son. He taught Shivaji horse - riding, archery and swordsmanship. Young Shivaji became such an expert in these crafts that even well known masters lost out to him.

Shivaji was very independent. He did not want to remain, like his father, a Jagirdaar under some Sultan. His aim was to establish his own independent kingdom, no matter how small. With this in mind he raised an army out of the trusted and brave 'Mawale' people. Taking a few trusted men with him, Shivaji surveyed the hilly areas in the Konkan region. He gathered information about the secret roads of the many forts there and the exact number of soldiers. He even made a plan to capture one of them.

In 1646, Shivaji took full advantage of the turbulence in the kingdom of Bijapur. Together with his Mawale chief, Shivaji tricked the guard of Torna fort and captured it. There were two lakh 'honn' (approximately eight lakh rupees) in the state treasury, which they added to their booty. South-east of Torna, almost 5 miles away on the adjacent peak, he built a new fort. He named it 'Rajgarh'. Below this fort he built a wall surrounding in a large area in which he built three villages.

Dadaji passed away on 7th March, 1647. On his death bed he urged Shivaji, "Follow the path of great idealism that Bhawani Ishani has showed you and your ambition will be fulfilled."

These words from Dadaji inspired Shivaji to double his efforts and within a year, he took over the Kondana fort along with its occupants from the Sultan of Bijapur. After this he captured large areas of Bijapur and extended his own kindgom to a large extent. He renamed the Kondana fort as 'Singhgarh'.

However, Shivaji was now faced with a great problem. The Sultan of Bijapur imprisoned Shivaji's father Shahji and took over his entire land and army. In order to save his father's life, Shivaji had to surrender three forts of Bangalore, Kondana and Kandopi. He also had to enter into a treaty with the Sultan of Bijapur. Between 1650-55 Shivaji did not attack anywhere. Peacefully, he was involved in organising his kingdom and strengthening his army. However, he did take over the Purandar fort and he gave a village to the three brothers who were the owners of the fort. He also appointed, one of them called Pilaji, to a high post in his army.

There now came a big hurdle in Shivaji's process of expansion. It was Raja Chandra Rao of Rora Jawli. Despite all his efforts, Shivaji could not get him to co-operate. Finally, Shivaji decided to remove this hurdle from his path. As a result, he gained a large region as well as a huge amount of wealth. Now he had a strong foundation of his kingdom. Two miles away from Jawli, he built Pratapgarh fort and then built a temple of goddess Bhawani, who was his deity.

The year 1658 saw intense fighting between the Mughal princes for the throne of Delhi. Shivaji seized this opportunity and crossing the Western Ghats, he entered the South Konkan region. There he captured Kalyan and Bhiwandi - two cities of Bijapur kingdom. With that he gained a large amount of wealth. Thereafter he established his rule on some parts of the Kolaba district and built a number of forts. Shivaji looted a number of Portugese villages and made a stable base on the fort of Asiri. He built ships in the gulf of Kalyan and thus, laid a foundation for his navy.

Shivaji's entire life is full of numerous tales of his bravery. Amongst them are some very popular and interesting like the one about the killing of Afzal Khan. After Aurangzeb withdrew from the south, Bijapur returned to peace. With the aim to get back the

lost areas, Shahji was ordered to bring forth Shivaji. He replied, "I have disowned Shivaji as my son. If you can, do not hesitate to capture and punish him."

The Sultan of Bijapur placed a *bira* (betel leaf) in the court and said, "The person who wants to be the 'Senapati' in this battle should pick up this Bira." In short he asked his soldiers to take up the challenge.

Afzal Khan, a renowned Commander, rose up and said, "I'll defeat Shivaji whilst seated on my horse and bring him before you."

Letters written by householders of that time clearly show that the Queen Mother of Bijapur told Afzal Khan, "Make friends with Shivaji, then betray and bring him here as a captive."

On receiving the news of Afzal Khan's approach, Shivaji and his companions were worried. Folklore says that finally goddess Bhawani came to Shivaji in his dreams and said, "My child! Do not be afraid. I shall protect you and you shall be victorious."

His mother Jijabai too said, "It is you who will be victorious."

Soon thereafter Afzal Khan sent a Brahmin messenger to Shivaji and promised him that the Sultan of Bijapur did not want to betray him in any way. However, the Brahmin messenger finally told Shivaji that Afzal Khan's intentions were not entirely good.

Finally, the two agreed to meet. Afzal came seated in a 'palki' (palenquin) with a sword hung at his waist. Shivaji appeared to be without any weapons, but on his left hand he had a 'Sherpanja' (Tiger claws). Under his robe he had an iron net and below his turban an iron cap. Both had brought along four bodyguards each, but they met alone. When both embraced each other, Shivaji, thin and short, came up only to Afzal Khan's shoulders. The tall and hefty Afzal Khan, tried to throttle Shivaji, neck and at the same time struck him in the stomach with his sword. Shivaji was saved because of his iron armour. In a flash Shivaji pierced Afzal Khan's stomach with the Sherpanja and pulled out his intestines. He then came out and returned to his companions.

A few moments later, the Maratha soldiers who had been hiding amongst the bushes near the village below, attacked the troops of

Bijapur. The battle continued for three hours and about three thousand soldiers of the Bijapur army were killed. This battle saw Shivaji gain in a big way. He captured Afzal Khan's cannons, fire-arms, tents, 65 elephants, four thousand horses, 12,00 camels, 2,000 bales of cloth, a large amount of cash and jewellery.

After this, Shivaji advanced on to Kolhapur district. He took over Panhala fort and under the command of Rustame Jama, he defeated yet another army of Bijapur. Next, he loooted the villages of Ratangiri in the southern part of the Konkan.

Shivaji had heard about Guru Ramdas from Sant Tukaram. He too desired to become a disciple. At that time Guru Ramdas never stopped at one place for more than 2-3 days. Therefore, it was a long time before Shivaji could meet him. Ultimately, Shivaji took a vow that he would not eat or drink till he had met Mahatma Ramdasji. Soon he saw Gurudev sitting under a Gular (wild fig) tree in the jungle. Ramdasji initiated him with the *mantra, "Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram".* Shivaji sought permission to give up everything in order to come and serve him. Guru Ramdasji asked, "So that is why you have come to me? You are a Kshatriya, a man of action. It is your duty to protect the country and your subjects from all dangers, serve Brahmins and look after the cattle. These are the orders of Sri Ramchandra. Recall the advice that Sri Krishna had given Arjun in the *Bhagawadgita,* tread the warrior's path of duty, and practise Karma yoga (action)."

Shivaji was a great devotee of his guru. He never started a new project without the permission of his guru. He had no desire for kingly powers or wealth. He had become a true Karmayogi. Once he placed his entire wealth into the hands of Gurudev and set out to beg for alms with him. Gurudev smiled and said, "Good! I accept your kingdom. Now look after it as my representative."

It is since then that Shivaji changed the colour of his flag to saffron. It proclaimed that the kingdom belonged to Guru Ramdas and Shivaji was there only to serve him.

Shivaji was of a strong and noble character. He respected all religions. He never harmed any Muslim mosque. If during any

battle he found a copy of the 'Koran' (the holy book of Muslims), he would keep it with respect and give it to some Muslim. He had a number of Muslim servants. At the same time Shivaji kept strict self control and followed the religion of true humanism. When the Marathas won over Kalyan and imprisoned its Sultan, Abaji Sondev, the army chief wanted to present the beautiful princess to Shivaji. Hearing this in court, Shivaji folded his hands before the princess and said, "Sister, if my mother was as beautiful, then I too would have been good looking."

Thereafter Shivaji gifted her with a lot of clothes and jewellery and sent her back to her father.

To suppress Shivaji's growing powers, the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, appointed his maternal uncle Shaista Khan as Subedar of the south. He also sent Maharaj Jaswant Singh to help him. Shivaji knew that he could never face the Mughal army, therefore, he did something which the Mughals could never even dream of.

Shaista Khan came to Pune and made Shivaji's 'Lal Mahal' his residence. No Maratha was permitted to enter the city without a written permission. Shivaji's followers took permission for a wedding procession and in it they included some armed soldiers. It was the month of Ramzan and a dark moonless night. After the first hour of the night Shivaji and his companions entered the city. Whilst passing before 'Lal Mahal' some of them hid there in the dark while the *baraat* (wedding procession) continued on its way.

In the dark these people removed the bricks on a wall and entered into the house. Once inside, they spread out and began to fight. Shaista Khan's son died while trying to protect his father. Shaista Khan himself managed to escape but he lost one thumb.

Shaista Khan wrote to Aurungzeb about the incompetency of his troops and betrayal by Maharaja Jaswant Singh. The Emperor, considering both of them to be incompetent, recalled them to Delhi and appointed Prince Muazzam as the Subedar of the south.

The Mughal emperor sent Maharaj Jai Singh to suppress Shivaji. Shivaji did not wish to fight against any Hindu, he therefore, went to meet him at his place near Pune. Maharaj Jai Singh managed

to convince Shivaji that he should go and meet the Mughal emperor. After making proper arrangements for his kingdom, he set out for Agra.

In Agra, the Emperor did not welcome him with due warmth. On the contrary, he kept Shivaji under house arrest. Here too, Shivaji used his cleverness to escape. At first he pretended to be ill, and then on geting well started distributing large hampers of sweets. One day he himself sat in one along with his son Sambhaji and reached the outskirts of the city. Then carefully disguising himself they travelled to Raigarh.

Shivaji fought many battles, but the most famous is the one he fought at Singhgarh. At that time, the fort was called Kondana. It was under the protection of the Mughal emperor's Rajput army. Shivaji sent Tanaji Malsare, his Mawale army chief, to capture it. Tanaji took 300 soldiers with him. In the dark of night they climbed up the mountain with the help of rope ladders. They killed the guards outside and entered the fort through its secret tunnels. As soon as the Rajput soldiers came before them, they attacked shouting, "Har! Har! Mahadev". Uday Bhan, the Rajput leader invited Tanaji for a duel. Both killed each other and the Marathas won the battle. Shivaji reached the fort and said, "We have taken the fort but lost the lion."

In memory of Tanaji, he renamed the fort Singhgarh. On 6th June 1674, Shivaji ascended the throne with Hindu rites. He lead a procession on the streets of Raigarh, seated on an elephant with an umbrella above his head. At the head of the procession were two elephants each carrying a flag. Of these one was a saffron flag prepared from a piece taken from the robe of Sri Guru Ramdas.

About 6 years later on 3rd April 1680, Shivaji passed away. Shivaji was a worthy son of India and his memories will remain imprinted forever in the heart of every Indian.

NANA FADNAVIS

—Yashwantnarain Deodhar

ALL great men are considered as darling of the present, heritage from the past and a creator of the future. This is true of Balaji Janardan Bhanu (Nana Fadnavis). He too belonged to that class of impressive and able administrators who had given rise to the 'Maratha Rule'.

Nana was born on 12th February, 1742. His father was Janardan Pant and his mother Rukminibai. Nana's mother belonged to the Mehendalae family. Nana had his 'thread ceremony' at the young age of 4. As a young child he made clay statues of the gods and goddesses that he saw in the temples. This became a strange past time for him. He would pray to these images, give offerings and even cook meals for them. At the age of 10, he was married to Yashodabai of the Gadra family. When he was 14, he fell off the horse but survived.

30th March, 1756 was an important day in Nana's life. On this day he accompanied Balaji, Bajirao (Nana Saheb) Peshwa to the 'Konkan' hills (the Western Ghats). In the same year, his father passed away. As per rule he was given his father's post and also the title of 'Fadnavis'. Nana's punctuality, tenacity and discipline were well rooted along with his inherited intelligence.

Balaji Bajirao Peshwa, took Nana with him to Srirangapatnam. After he returned, approximately after a year, his wife gave birth to a son. Unfortunately the child died after a few months. A short while after this, Nana took his mother and his wife to visit all the holy places along the banks of river Godavari. He was planning to go along the Ganga, when he was asked to accompany Sada Shiv Rao, a cousin of the Peshwa, to the battle of Panipat. He took along his wife and mother too. This shows clearly that Nana was as dutiful as he was religious. In his autobiography he has described in great detail the battle of 1761 and the devastating defeat.

When Nana returned from the battle of Panipat, he could not trace his wife and mother. He sank into a great depression and decided to look for them on his way back to Pune. He learnt that with the help of Bairoji Rao Barunkar, his wife had reached Jinji safely. Later, he came to know that his mother, along with many others was imprisoned in the Abdali Cantonement. Nana was ready to lay down his life in order to save her honour and bring her back his mother to safety. Soon, however, he learnt that his mother had passed away.

Weighed down with grief, Nana turned towards Pune and reached Burhanpur. There he met Peshwa Balaji Rao, who, acompanied by a large army, was going to Panipat to help his brother Sadashivrao. When he came to know from Nana about the routing of the Maratha troops. he turned back towards Pune.

Peshwa Balaji Rao passed away in Pune on 24th June, 1761. His son, Madhav Rao was declared heir to the title of Peshwa by Raja Chatrapati of Satara. When Madhav Rao was appointed Peshwa, he was 17 years old while Nana was 19 years old. From a very young age they were close friends. The changed circumstances placed Nana in a very critical situation. Madhav Rao's uncle, Raghunath Rao wanted to take control over Pune. In order to take over the seat of power he removed Nana from the post of Fadnavis. Soon, however, Madhavrao cancelled this and re-appointed Nana once more as Fadnavis.

After being re-appointed to the post of Fadnavis the work allotted to Nana was very different to his prior work. Earlier he had administrative and political powers. Now his work was divided into two sections. One was to take care of all the income and expenditure in Pune, the capital of the Peshwas. He was assigned to make an estimate for it, analyse it and in addition, look after the administrative work in the capital. All this was part of his work as Fadnavis. On the other hand, when the Peshwa was away on some campaign Nana's duties included looking after all his work related to the army. Thus, this new appointment put a lot of administrative power into Nana's hands. On numerous occassions the Peshwa came into conflict with his uncle Raghunath Rao

because of difference in opinion. On such ocassions, Nana proved his worthiness. The Peshwa was very happy with Nana for his forthright life style and strong administrative skills. He bestowed Nana all the power required to run the administration. It was, thus, not surprising that within ten years, Nana became Peshwa's Chief Minister. His loyalty proved beyond doubt that he was worthy of every bit of the Peshwa's trust in him.

Peshwa Madhav Rao died in 1772 and his younger brother Narayan Rao inherited the title. He was not only young of age but inexperienced too. The entire responsibility fell on Nana and Sakharam Bapu. Sakharam Bapu was much older to Nana in age. On a number of ocassions, the Peshwa, influenced by his mother, took such a decision that agitated the people. Narayan Rao's uncle Raghunath Rao had his eyes on the title of Peshwa. He took advantage of the people's unrest and had Narayan Rao murdered. Nana acted swiftly and saved Pune from riots and arson. To chalk out the next plan of action, Nana called a meeting of all the important people and administrative officers of the town. According to the plan of the meeting, Nana and Bapu formed a committee of 12 important leaders. They became famous as the 'Barbhai' (12 brothers). Nana then pressurised the king of Satara to proclaim that the appointment of Raghunath Rao as Peshwa was against all rules. During that time Nana managed to bring the Nizam and many other rulers under the control of the 'Barbhai'. In the end, Nana was successful in proclaiming Sawai Madhav Rao as the heir of Narayanrao and the rightful Peshwa. The British took advantage of the prevailing chaos in the Peshwa ruled region and attacked the Marathas. Nana retaliated and defeated them. He made a compromise and established peace. This was called the 'Purandar Treaty'. Once more the British blatantly tried to establish Raghunath Rao as the Peshwa. Nana, however defeated them at Bargaon and brought their intentions to nought.

During those days, the British were in a delicate position in Europe. America was in the midst of its War of Independence and the French were at the helm of power. The French Ambassador Saint Loobin was in India. Nana, who had been in touch with

French authorities gave St. Loobin a warm welcome. He wanted to establish friendly relation with the French.

Agitated with Nana's diplomacy, the British planned to bring the Marathas under control by dethroning him. Nana brought together a number of kingdoms and this great alliance among the rulers left the British completely isolated. The rulers who joined hands with Nana were. Hyder Ali, Nizam, the Portugese, Dutch, French, Delhi's Mughal emperor and Siddhi from Janjira. All this proved Nana's administrative skills was second to none. The British tried by all means to woo the Maratha leaders, but failed and finally had to sign the Saalbai pact.

Meanwhile, the situation in Delhi was going from bad to worse. However, Nana and Mahadji Shinde turned the tables and brought things under control with great efficiency. By offering protection to the Mughal Emperor, they engraved the Maratha influence on the sultanate. Nana took great care to protect Emperor Shah Alam from the clutches of the British. This again proved his political foresight.

Nana was now faced with a new problem. Tipu Sultan from Mysore began to encroach upon Maratha territory. If the British joined hands with Tipu, the Marathas would face grave danger. Cleverly, he made the British promise that they would help the Marathas in attacking Tipu, but they went back on their words. Tipu was defeated and peace was established with the signing of a Treaty of Gajendragarh. In this manner, not only did he defeat Tipu, but also showed how treacherous the British were. Tipu openly supported the French and this brought him into conflict with the British. The British then requested Nana to help them against Tipu. After a lot of hesitation he agreed, as Tipu still controlled a large area of the Maratha region. Nana wanted to free these regions from Tipu's clutches. However, he was clear in his policy that the British would not completely defeat Tipu again. In the end, the state of Mysore went to war with the British and Tipu was defeated. Nana was successful in retrieving the Maratha region.

Nana was just recovering from the effects of this war when the Nizam started to create havoc in that region. The Nizam was defeated in the battle of Kharda and in 1795 peace was established.

Just as Nana was getting relieved of the Maratha-Nizam war, Peshwa Sawai Madhav Rao committed suicide. As usual a battle for succession ensued, which completely ruined Nana's peace of mind. Finally, Bajirao II was made the Peshwa. At about the same time Mahadji Shinde died and he was succeeded by Daulatrao Shinde. Bajirao II and Daulatrao Shinde could not stick to any one principle or policy. They could not get along with Nana and things came to such loggerheads that Nana was thrown into prison. He was, however, soon released. This left Nana heart broken though he continued to remain loyal to the Peshwa rulers. In the chaos that followed, the British tried to force the Peshwa into a subsidiary alliance. But as long as Nana lived, he saw to it that the Peshwas did not get trapped into such alliances. After being humiliated in various ways by Bajirao II and Daulatrao, Nana passed away on 13th March, 1800.

In order to get news from all corners of the kingdom, Nana had built an efficient network of spies and this network was the main reason for his successful administration. Not only was Nana a staunch nationalist, he had a great capacity for work too.

One can estimate his political acumen by acknolwedging the excellent understanding he had in judging the British policies. According to Nana, "In the beginning, the speeches and writings of the Englishmen are so enticing that everyone gets trapped into their clasp of magnanimity and universal brotherhood. People begin to believe that all the saintliness and truth in the world were bestowed on them by God . Their manner of talking is charming and full of humility. Only when one gets to know them better, do they show their true colours. Dividing the people by favouring one and suppressing another is an inborn talent of these Englishmen. Their policy of rule is by concocting lies and also 'Divide and Rule'."

It is clear that Nana's name is indelibily imprinted in the History of India because of his devotion to God, Nation and his Mother,

his loyalty to fellow countrymen and his love towards his duties. While studying Nana's character we remember the following words — 'Continue to discharge your duties well, because all forms of honour and dignity are ingrained in them.'

AHILYABAI

—**Srinath Singh**

AHILYABAI was born in 1735 in the Pathardi village of Maharashtra. Her father Mankoji Scindia was an ordinary householder.

It was by sheer coincidence that Maharaja Mallharrao Holkar of Indore stopped in this village while on his way to Pune. He camped at the Shiva temple there. There he saw this well-mannered girl whom he liked very much. He called Mankoji Scindia and said, "I would like to make her my daughter-in-law."

Mankoji agreed and she went to Indore with Mallaharrao. There she was married to his son Khanderao with great pomp and splendour.

Ahilyabai was not very beautiful. She was dark and of medium built. However, Mallaharrao saw certain good qualities in her which made him take her as his daughter-in-law.

As soon as she stepped into her in-laws' place, she began to take good care of her husband and in-laws. This soon endeared her to them. She carried out the household work so efficiently that whenever Mallaharrao left the capital, he entrusted her with some administrative work. On his return when he saw that the given duties were completed with great efficiency, he used to be very happy. Meanwhile Ahilyabai gave birth to a son and a daughter. Her son was named Malirao and her daughter, Muktabai. Thus, she spent nine years happily with her family. Then began a string of tragedies for her. Despite all her woes, Ahilyabai carried on her duties with such patience and efficiency that she began to be counted among the great women of India.

Those were the days when the Marathas had become powerful in that region. They were expanding their territories under the rule of the Peshwas. They collected a 'chauth' (cess) from all the kingdoms under them. The area around Bharatpur were ruled by the Jats and they refused to pay 'Chauth'. They were even prepared

to fight for it. With the Peshwa's permission, Mallharrao, along with his son Khanderao attacked Bharatpur. They surrounded the Kumbher Fort near Deeg. Khanderao died in this battle and on hearing the news, Mallharao fainted in the battlefield. His brave soldiers carried him to a safe place. When he regained conciousness and saw Ahilyabai saddened by the loss of her husband, he forgot about his own sorrow. He began to console Ahilyabai. With great difficulty he stopped her from becoming a Sati on Khanderao's pyre. He said, "You, my daughter, are my only support. If you go, how will I manage such a huge kingdom."

Ahilyabai thought, serving her subjects would be better than dying on the pyre of her dead husband. Hence, she obeyed her father in law and began looking after the affairs of the State.

After the defeat at Panipat the Maratha power began to weaken in the north. In order to reclaim that power they decided to extend northwards. Mallharrao too was a part of this group. He was already in the depths of sorrow because of his son's death. He stopped at Alampur, near Gwalior. Here, he died after suffering from some ear problem. After her husband's death, Ahilyabai bore her father-in-laws' death too with patience and calm. She had a memorial built here in his name and gave Rs. 30,000 to the village for its upkeep.

Ahilyabai's son Malirao ascended the throne. He was a cruel and bad ruler who ill-treated his subjects. This made Ahilyabai very sad. After nine months he passed away, but even in the midst of that sorrow, she continued to serve her subjects as she had promised to her father-in-law. With the Peshwa's advice she appointed Gangadharrao as Minister and began to rule. However, Gangadharrao was selfish and cunning. He told Ahilyabai to turn to god, adopt a son and leave all affairs of the State to him. But Ahilyabai did not agree. She had decided to leave her kingdom to anyone who showed efficieny in handling State affairs. This instigated Gangadharrao to bring Raghunathrao, the Peshwa's uncle, to Indore. Together they aimed to usurp the kingdom. Seeing this, Ahilyabai called her army officers and village Mukhiyas to a large 'Durbar' (meeting). Everyone agreed that Ahilyabai should

look after the State affairs and if Raghunathrao comes, he should be opposed. At that time her army chief was Tukojirao Holkar. He stationed his army on the banks of the Shipra river but for some unknown reason, Raghunathrao did not come.

No sooner had one problem been solved, another followed suit. Thieves and dacoits increasingly troubled the people in towns and villages. Ahilyabai called a 'Durbar' (meeting) once more to seek a solution to this new menace. Not only that, this bold lady also proclaimed that anyone who succeeded in suppressing the criminals would be married to her daughter Muktabai. A young Maratha youth stood up and said that if she helped him with soldiers and expenses, he would wipe out the dacoits. Ahilyabai agreed. The youth was Yashwantrao Fanshe. Within two years he normalised the situation and Ahilyabai married her daughter to him, as promised.

Indore was now a safe place from thieves and dacoits. As a result, business-men from surrounding areas started settling here. Indore grew into a large town and trade began to flourish here. All the subjects were happy and lived peacefully.

Ahilyabai now turned her attention to improving the capital. She built wide roads, temples, *dharamshalas* and had wells dug. Not only here, but also outside her kingdom, she had temples and *dharmashalas* built at pilgrim centres. These facilities were built not only for her own subjects but also for people from other regions. During the hot summer days, she made arrangements for water at numerous places - so that thirsty farmers and animals could quench their thirst.

In Ahilyabai's kingdom, childless couples could adopt a child and people could will their property to whomsoever they wished to. Widows were entitled to inherit their husbands property. Devichand was a wealthy trader. When he died, Tukojirao wanted to merge his wealth into the royal treasury in accordance to the rule of the land. His widow appealed to Ahilyabai saying the wealth should be hers. Ahilyabai stopped Tukojirao from taking such a step and gave back everything to his widow. There were many such stories about Ahilyabai.

Ahilyabai led a very simple life. She did not spend anything on herself. Whatever came into the royal treasury, she spent on improving the condition of her subjects. She kept away from self praise and sycophancy. Once a Brahman wrote a book praising her. Ahilyabai had it thrown into the river.

One wonders, why this good and pure woman was faced with so much sorrow. She saw her husband, father-in-law and son die before her eyes. So also bore the sorrow of death of her daughter Muktabai'a sixteen year old son who was greatly loved by Ahilyabai. After a year Muktabai's husband too passed away. After the death of her husband and Son, Muktabai grew restless. She decided to become a sati with her husband's body, and asked her mother's permission for it. Ahilyabai tried to dissuade her saying, "Now you are my only support. If you leave me, what will I do?"

Muktabai replied, "Mother, you are right, but just imagine! You have aged. I may live on for many years. They will be no one to support me after you. After I die you will have to spend only a short time more. If I do not commit Sati now, who knows how long I shall live? How will I spend the rest of my life?"

When she refused to reconsider her decision, Ahilyabai gave her permission. She watched her daughter burn as a Sati, before her own eyes. One cannot describe the sorrow and grief that she experienced that time.

Ahilyabai passed away at the age of 60. Tukojirao Holkar, her 'Senapati', (chief army commander), who had been helping her all along sat on the throne of Indore. He made several statues of Ahilyabai and had them placed in the temples of Indore, Prayag, Nasik, Gaya, Ayodhya and Maheshwar. Yashwantrao Holkar built a memorial for Ahilyabai in Maheshwar. It took 34 years to build this at a cost of one and a half crore Rupees. It may be called the Taj Mahal of Central India.

TIPU SULTAN

—Premchandra Bhardwaj

Just outside Srinangapatnam, the old capital of Mysore, are the graves of Tipu, his father Hyder Ali and his mother Fatima. They are built next to each other under one roof in Lal Baag. On Tipu's epitaph are written the words, 'Shahe Shahda' and 'Noor-e-Islamuddin', meaning, 'the king of matyrs and light of the poor.' Tipu was true to these descriptions for which he has become immortal in the history of India.

In the 18th century, the British and French were competing with each other to extend their hold over the central part of southern India. Finally, in about twenty years the British won over the French. They, however, had to face the strong Marathas and the brave Hyder Ali.

Hyder Ali was the son of a soldier and was himself an ordinary soldier. He could not even read or write. He was employed in the Mysore army under Hindu rulers, but in a short period of time, because of his cleverness, bravery and determination he became the Sultan of Mysore. However, this did not satisfy him. He began extending his kingdom on all sides. The Marathas, the Nizam as well as the British grew jealous of his increasing power and waited for an opportunity to pull him down. Hyder Ali's eldest son became famous in the pages of history as Tipu Sultan. His name was Fatehali Tipu and he was named after a Muslim fakir (mendicant) Tipu Mastana Auliya. It is said that he was born in 1753 with blessings from that fakir.

By sheer strength and war strategies, Hyder Ali made the British taste bitter defeat in many battles. He did not allow them to even set foot in Mysore. His son, Tipu, showed such bravery and battle skills at a young age that it made his father truly proud.

At the age of 18, he won his first battle against the British. This was fought on the outskirts of Madras. Hyder Ali carried out a

strategy to push back. Smith, the British army chief. He sent Tipu, along with five thousand soldiers, towards Madras. He reached Madras so quickly that no one could have imagined his arrival. News of his arrival shocked the British Governor and the members of his council. At that particular time, they had gathered for a stroll and lunch at a beach-side garden. As soon as they got news of Tipu's coming, they ran to a ship anchored nearby. Thus, they somehow managed to save their lives. If that ship had not been there, there is no doubt that Tipu would have taken all of them as prisoners.

Tipu captured St. Thomas hill, five miles away from Madras. There he built a strong fort and started capturing the surrounding areas from the British.

As mentioned before, Hyder Ali's growing power was not liked by the Marathas, Nizam and the British. They thus planned to join forces against him. The first to attack him were the Marathas, but Hyder Ali cunningly tempted them on to his side. The Nizam kept wavering. At first he joined the English forces to attack Mysore, but in a short time he went against them. Not that he remained loyal to Hyder Ali. During the battle at a vital moment, he withdrew his troops and left Hyder Ali to face Smith and the English troops alone. In such a situation Hyder Ali was forced to retreat in order to save his soldiers. His enemies spread the false news that he had lost. His aged mother was at that time 200 miles away in Hydernagar. She could not sit quietly after hearing about her son's defeat. She sat in a palanquin and travelled towards the battle field to inspire and give him moral support. It was raining hard and it was a long and torturous road to the battlefield, but nothing scared her. She had with her one thousand cavalry men, and before her palanquin, rode 200 'burkha' clad women. All of them went forth to join Hyder Ali in the battle field. The aged mother went upto her son, encouraged him and prayed for his victory.

In Mangalore, Tipu had his second great battle with the British. Tipu's army defeated them. The people of Mangalore gave him a warm welcome. To celebrate this victory a painting was made on the door of the Madras fort. It showed Hyder Ali seated on

a throne with the British standing before him with a treaty in hand. Smith had an elephant's trunk in place of his nose and from there 'ashrafis' (gold coins) were showering down before Hyder Ali.

Lord Warren Hastings was greatly troubled on hearing about the pitiable condition of the British in this battle. He sent a large army under Sir Ayarkoot and 15 lakh rupees from Bengal. He also took 7 lakh rupees from the Nawab of Arcot. However, after three successive defeats Ayarkoot went back. Hyder Ali had to return to the Arcot fort because of a painful boil on his back. Seeing that it was not healing, he called Tipu to his side and appointed him Sultan. This great warrior passed away on 7th December, 1782.

India was faced with a critical situation at that time. On one hand Scindia, Bhonsle and Gaikwad, and on the other hand the Nizam had surrendered before the British. Nana Fadnavis too was faced with the offer of an alliance. It was at such a time that Tipu ascended the throne. He vowed to complete his father's unfulfilled dream.

In 1784, the British made a treaty with Tipu. In it they recognised him as his father's heir and promised never to attack his kingdom. Before the ink could dry on the papers, the British went back on their promise as the British were terrified of Tipu. A British priest, W.H. Hutton, wrote that English mothers scared their naughty children by saying "Beware! Tipu is coming!"

Cornwallis was sent from England to replace Warren Hastings as Governor General of India. As soon as he arrived, the Nizam sought his help against Tipu Sultan. He did not take any action immediately but promised to help the Nizam when required. Cornwallis now waited for an opportunity for a war with Tipu, because it was clear to him that Tipu's friendship with the French spelt disaster for the British.

America had become independent of England and this was a blow to the British prestige. They decided to regain it by increasing their power over India. The reason why they fought against Tipu was this that in the process of their Empire building he appeared to be the biggest thorn. He was as honest and just as he was brave. As he had no experience of underhand dealings, he completely

trusted the teaty made with the British. He did not realize that they were planning to attack him. They took full advantage of his broken relations with the Marathas and the Nizam. They aided the Nizam in his attack on Tipu and also instigated the Marathas to join them against him. The British knew that even with the help of the Nizam and the Marathas, they were no match for Tipu. They tempted the two leaders with the promise that whatever was gained from Tipu would be equally divided amongst them.

The British historian, Fox, had admited that this plot against Tipu was one hatched by dacoits against a true king. Tipu fought the troops of Bengal and Madras so fiercely that he pushed them right back to Madras. This was his first victory against his three enemies. The news of this terrible defeat put Cornwallis to great shame. He reacted by marching down with a huge army from Bengal to Madras on 12 December, 1790. At the same time the Nizam's and Maratha troops also attacked Tipu. The British had won over some of Tipu's Amirs and Sardars (leaders) with huge bribes. They filled his army with people who had been richly rewarded by betraying him. They left no stone unturned to weaken him from both inside and outside. Tipu was forced to retreat as he was surrounded by enemies and betrayed by those he thought were his own. However, Tipu did not lose hope. Finally, after a heavy defeat on the fort of Somarpeet, Tipu agreed to come to an understanding with the British. The Marathas also wanted an understanding.

The agreement was made on 23rd February, 1792. Half of Tipu's kingdom was divided between the English, Marathas and the Nizam. Tipu was forced to give three crores as *harjana* (fine), out of which one crore was taken there and then. He was forced to keep his two children, 10 and 8 yrs old, as surety with the British.

In accordance with the agreement, Tipu paid up the remaining amount within the stipulated two years. At the same time he began to build new forts and recruit new troops for the safety of his capital and kingdom. Within two years he rebuilt his destroyed kingdom into a flourishing one.

Not only was he a brave warrior, but also an efficient ruler. The British had thought that Tipu would be unable to pay up the

harjana withtin the stipulated time so they would be able to annex the rest of his kingdom. Their plan failed. They had defeated the French in most places and taken almost the entire country under their rule. Only Tipu's independent kingdom remained. After Cornwallis, Welleslly had started preparations to attack Tipu. He was afraid that the Nizam and the Marathas would not support him against Tipu. He, thus, tried to weaken both of them. He successfully engaged the Marathas in infighting and ensnared the Nizam in the aid given for the maintenance of his troops. He also started spreading false rumours about Tipu, saying that he was plotting with the French.

On 3rd February, 1799, the British army marched towards Tipu's capital. Tipu sent a messenger with a proposal of friendship, and this he did again and again. Wellesley ignored these and proclaimed war on 22nd February. The British surrounded him from all sides - land and water. Tipu fought bravely till his last breath but the British were finally victorious only on the strength of treachery and betrayal.

Troops approximately 30,000, from Bengal, Madras, Bombay and the Nizam had gathered together for this battle. At every step Tipu was faced with betrayal, deceit and treachery from his own officers and army chiefs. Wellesley had successfully spread a network of deceitful back-stabbers amongst Tipu's soldiers.

A terrible war raged at Mehtab Baag and there too the British used deceit and treachery to emerge victorious. This was the main entrance to the fort and also to the capital. Tipu's trusted friend Mir Sadiq had also joined the British and helped them to enter the fort through a broken wall. Even then Tipu tried to save the fort. Along with his handful of companions he continued to fight. Finally a bullet hit him on the left side of his chest but he continued firing. Soon another bullet hit him on the right side of his chest and his horse fell, bullet-riddled to the ground.

Tipu was carried in a palanquin, to a nearby mosque, and even in this condition, he refused to be cowed down. Some English soldiers came to him and tried to remove his jewel-studded 'Kamarband' (belt). Tipu killed them with his sword. Immediately,

a bullet pierced him on the right side of his head and the brave warrior breathed his last. He would often say that it is better to live like a lion for two days rather than like a sheep for 200 years.

Tipu was a brave warrior and a commander of high order. He was fiercely independent and a staunch opponent of any foreign rule. Truly, Hyder Ali and Tipu were the greatest opponents of the British at that time. Both father and son have had their names engraved indelibly in the golden pages of India's most glorious history.

TYAGRAJ

—Gargi Gupta

TYAGRAJ was a great singer of south India. Though he composed in Telugu, the language of Andhra Pradesh, he was born in Tiruvayur in the State of Tamil Nadu. He spent most of his life in Tiruvayur. In ancient times, there was in Tiruvarur, a great devotee of Lord Rama. His name was Ramabrahma. In his childhood, he had studied the *Vedas* and *Shastras* very well. The youngest of his three sons, was Tyagraj. He is considered to have lived from 1767 to 1847. He was born on 4^{th} May, 1767. His mother's name was Sitamba.

Tyagraj was a sharp child. Within a short time he had read through *Mahabharata*, *Bhagawata*, *Puranas* and other such epics, but his favourite was the *Ramayana*. He soon become a great devotee of Rama.

Rising before dawn, he used to pray and take a dip in the Kaveri river. Then he used to read the *Ramayana.* Thereafter, he would sit beside his father to study. In the evenings, he would sing 'bhajans'. He had a very sweet voice and so the devotees listened to him with great pleasure.

The royal singer of Tanjavur court, Venkataramanayya, played the Veena very well. He was also called Sonti Veena Venkat Ramandas. Incidentally, he lived in the same lane as Tyagraj. Tyagraj had not learned music from any guru, but impressed with his sweet voice and eagerness to learn, Venkatramanayya made him his disciple. Within a year Tyagraj learnt all there was to learn from him. He could not only sing on his own but also compose the music independently.

At a young age of 18, he was married to Parvatamma. Two years later, his father passed away and seven years after his mariage his wife too passed away. He then married her younger sister Kamalamba.

Tyagraj was a staunch devotee of God and thus not at all worldly wise. His two elder brothers took advantage of this and, usurped all the property and left him with only a small house, a statue of Rama and a prayer box. This was enough for Tyagraj and he was happy.

The songs of Tyagraj are called 'Kirtans'. It is said, that one day, Devrishi Narada himself wanted to listen to Tyagraj singing. He came to Tyagraj's house disguised as a sadhu. Tyagraj was singing the praises of the lord, lost to the world around him. Pleased with his singing Naradji gave him a book made of palm leaves. This book *Swararnav,* is no longer available.

People from far and wide came to hear Tyagraj sing. Word of his devotion had spread all around. Other great masters of music grew jealous of his fame and were constantly trying to hurt him in various ways. Some of his well-wishers wanted the music of this great singer to rise up and reverberate around the palace walls. They constantly inspired him to go to the king's court.

Soon the news of Tyagraj's music reached the royal courts. Sharfoji was the king of Tanjore at that time. He too wanted to have such an illustrious artist grace his court. He sent some of his employees to Tyagraj with a lot of gifts and wealth, but can the worldly gifts tempt a devotee of Rama! His brothers tried hard to make him see sense but he turned a deaf ear to them. He expressed himself thus, *Nidhi Chaala sukhama, Ramuni sannidhi chaala sukhama* (Happiness lies in wealth or in closeness to Rama?) Due to this dedication of his, he did not go to the royal court.

This devotee of Rama sang Rama Bhajan and once a week went from house to house collecting alms. In this way he supported his family. Whatever he got was sufficient for the rest of the days. His brother were much angered with no earning by him.

One night while Tyagraj was in deep sleep, his elder brother thought, "If I sink his idols in the river-Kaveri, everything will become fine. Then Tyagraj will sing and get wealthy." With this hope he stole the images and flung them into the Kaveri. In the

morning, when Tyagraj saw the idols of his gods missing, he cried out in anguish. He wept and called out to his God, who, it appeared was testing him at that time.

Tyagraj left the house. He decided not to return till he found the idols. He searched high and low in numerous places but could not find them. Having lost all hope continued to be sad. Once while Tyagraj was asleep in a temple at night, he felt as though Rama and Laxmana were standing before him and saying, "Arise! Your idols are lying buried in the sands of the Kaveri, go and retrieve them." His heart danced with joy and streams of joyful tears ran down his cheeks. When he returned home with the idols, his wife was very pleased. His brothers too were so touched by his devotion that they bowed their heads in respect.

Sundaresh Mudaliyar was a great devotee of Tyagraj. One day he invited Tyagraj to his house and gave him a very warm welcome. While he was leaving, Mudaliyar placed a bag containing Rs.1000 in Tyagraj's palanquin without the knowledge of Tyagraj. A band of dacoits were travelling along the same road. They began to stone the palanquin. Tyagraj was surprised and wondered why they were doing so. What would they gain? It was then that a disciple of his told him about the money that Mudaliyar had placed in the palanquin. Tyagraj thought to himself — "What will I do with so much money?" He called the leader of the dacoits and gave him the bag of money.

With folded hands the 'Sardar' (leader of dacoits) said, "See the number of wounds on my body. Of the many stones that we threw at you, some were flung back at us by two brave princes. Oh Maharaj! Please forgive us."

Tyagraj thought that the princes must have been god Rama himself along with brother Laxmana who had come and rescued him. He told the dacoits, "You saw the vision of God."

The robbers were extremely ashamed and picking up the palanquin on their own shoulders they took Tyagraj to Kanchinagar.

During his life time his second wife passed away. After this sad incident, Tyagraj took 'sanyasa' (renunciation).

Before he undertook his last intense meditation he had taken complete 'sanyasa'. On the 5th day of Poush (mid December - mid January) at 11 in the morning, a strange sound emitted from his head and he passed into the next world. Ten days before his death, he had a vision of the Lord Rama calling him into his protection." On this he composed his famous song 'Giri pe Nelakonna'. In it he wrote, "On the mountain I saw Rama and I was esctatic and Rama said that within ten days I shall call you to me."

The day of his samadhi is commemorated with festivals all over India. He had composed many songs of which about 700 still exist. He had written a Drama too in which he described the character of Prahlada and also the boat-ride scene of Lord Krishna with his gopis on the river Yamuna.

Learned men have this to say of Tyagraj, "The Kaveri region has seen the birth of three great singers : Tyagraj, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri. Together they are called 'Trimurti'. All three were born at the same time and all three composed songs on the beauty and greatness of their birth place, of the five rivers, the temples and the images of deities within them."

Tyagraj did not compose songs for fame or wealth. Unlike many other composers, he did not enjoy royal patronage. This was essentially because he refused and rejected many offers to be a court musician. During his lifetime he had become so famous that numerous disciples gathered around him. His compositions were a combination of poetry and music.

Tyagraj was a devotee of Lord Rama, therefore, most of his songs were composed in praise of Rama. Although, he did compose some on other gods too. In many songs, he used music as an instrument, as an offering to god, and in yet other he has said music is 'Naad Sudharas' (the essence of sound). In order to proclaim his devotion and make this great singer a part of our lives, Tyagraj was not confined to the narrow regional boundaries. Till today, his music reverberates all over the open skies of India.

RAMMOHAN RAI

—Annaparna Ghosh

At the time when many Indians were turning to British education and converting to Christianity, Raja Rammohan Rai spread the basic tenets of the Hindu religion. This great man showed the uselessness of giving up one's own religion.

Rammohan was born in 1774* in Radhanagar, a village of Bengal. His father was Ramkant Rai and mother Tarini Devi. Tarini Devi's father had foretold that in time Rammohan would become an extraordinary man and his prediction proved correct.

Rammohan had such an amazing memory that whenever he heard a sentence, he memorized it in the same way. At a very young age he gained mastery over Persian and Arabic. At the age of 12, he went to study Sanskrit in Benares. There, having studied the 'Vedas' and 'Upanishads', he was convinced that only Brahma was eternal present and worship of Brahma is most important. As a young boy of sixteen years he began to spread his opinion by writing books. Fearing the wrath of the people, his parents asked him to leave the house. At the age of 16, he travelled to Tibet but there too, the religion failed to satisfy him. He began to point out the flaws in their religion and thereby made a number of enemies who tried to kill him. Incidentally, some sympathetic women sheltered him and thus, Rammohan was saved.

Rammohan Rai loved to read as well as write. He was very sharp too. During his 16th year itself he had attained a good knowledge of Urdu, Persian and Sanskrit apart from Bengali. When immersed in his studies he used to become unmindful of hunger and thirst. One morning after bathing, he sat down to read Valmiki's Ramayana in Sanskrit. He became so absorbed in reading it that he did not get up before he had read through all seven volumes.

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* Some people consider it to be 1772

He was a scholar and had studied religion very well. For this reason, when he raised his voice against image worship, the pandits of Benares could not refute him. Behind his back, they did their best to defame him as an atheist.

Many people were already against Rammohan, because of his anti religious teachings. In addition, when he began to oppose the practice of 'Sati' (burning of the living wife on her dead husband's pyre), his enemies increased in number. His father once more asked Rammohan to leave the house.

After the death of his father, Rammohan became completely independent. His enemies, however, kept on harassing him. They persuaded his mother to file a case in order to deprive him of his father's property. They reasoned with her that Rammohan had gone out of his religion and according to the laws of that time, he had no right to his father's property. Rammohan, however proved with all evidence, that not only was he upholding his father's religion but also trying to improve it. Rammohan won the case, but he returned all the property to his mother.

Rammohan, now thought that a high title would make people fear and respect him. A number of Britishers knew of Rammohan because of his fight for justice. He approached the Deputy Magistrate of Rangpur with a desire to work for the Government. He was pleased and immediately gave Rammohan a job. He quickly rose in his Departmental ranks but lack of time for social service made him resign after 14 years.

Having been relieved from the job Rammohan began to spread the knowledge of Brahma. He translated the Vedas and Upanishads into Bengali and English. He wrote a number of books exposing the hypocrisy in Hinduism. This made people turn into his staunch enemies. To oppose the arguments put up by Rammohan, a Bhattacharya in Calcutta published 'Vedanta Chandrika'. Rammohan was not one to sit quiet. To strengthen his arguments further he proved beyond doubt that worship of Brahma is considered to be of prime importance in Hinduism.

At about the age of 40, Rammohan left his house in the village and came to Calcutta where he bought a house in Maniktalla. Here

he founded a society called the 'Aatmiya Sabha'. Now many of the intelligentsia, wealthy and noted Hindus joined Rammohan and together they worshipped the Brahma. Followers of the Brahma Dharma increased day by day. The number of conversions to Christianity began to decrease, thus angering the Christian priests. Rammohan however continued to oppose them in a determined manner. Earlier, many people turned to Christianity because of the rigid work prescribed by the 'Sanatan Dharma' (way of life). With the founding of the 'Brahmo Samaj', people turned to that instead of Christianity. William Adam, an English priest, tried to influence Rammohan with Christianity. On the contrary, he got so influenced by Rammohan's thoughts and ideals that he too became a follower of the 'Brahmo Samaj'. This created a considerable stir in the Christian society.

Work of the 'Aatmiya Sabha' was carried on with great spirit and enthusiasm. Rammohan's fame increased manifold when he silenced scholars and priests like Subhramanya Shastri with his arguments on religion. His teachings rang of truth and practicality. Seeing this, many liberal minded leaders came and joined him to protect the Hindu religion.

Rammohan did a lot to bring about change in the society. He told the Viceroy Lord Bentick that the practice of 'Sati' was against all religious texts. The Government passed a law and made 'Sati' illegal. Rammohan played an important part in putting an end to polygamy and other malpractices in the society. Rammohan Rai spoke up for the inheritance rights of women too. This would enable women to maintain their rightful place in society. He also raised his voice against the selling of the female child. He felt that unless the English language was spread to all parts of India, ignorance and malpractices could not be wiped out. He therefore started working to spread the English language. The famous Hindu College was established in Calcutta with the combined efforts of educationist David Hare and Rammohan. Due to Rammohan's efforts, people from all walks of life, could become the jury in the Indian courts.

Due to his involvement in social and religious changes, Rammohan had to take part in politics too. He had proposed to the British Government in India that representatives of the Indian people should be part of the law-making body. He also proposed that the ancient Indian system of Panchayat rule should be revived.

Rammohan planned to travel to England and tell the people there about the ill treatment of the Indian people. No Indian had gone there with such intentions before. He began to look for an opportunity to go to England. At that time the Emperor of Delhi was looking for a suitable person to represent him in England against the East India Company. He found Rammohan to be the most appropriate person and after decorating him with the title of 'Raja' (King) he sent Rammohan to England.

On reaching England, Raja Rammohan Rai vividly described the condition of Indians back home and requested the British government to appoint Indians in high posts of the State administration.

In England, Rammohan was given a warm welcome and people were greatly influenced by his speeches. Great thinkers and religious leaders came to meet him. One particular priest was so greatly influenced by him that he invited Rammohan to his child's naming ceremony. He then showed his great respect by naming his son Rammohan. The British newspaper too wrote articles praising Rammohan. For a short while, he stayed in Bristol and became one with the people there. He planted the seeds of social service in their hearts. He died on 27th September, 1833 in the same city.

Rammohan played an important role in bringing about an awakening in the Indian society. At a time when people were trapped in supersitions and ignorance, it was not an easy task to cross numerous hurdles to bring about change in religion, society and education. Rammohan succeeded in attaining his goal because of his patience and determination towards his duties. He never allowed the subjects of his zamindari to undergo any difficulties. He was a religious leader, a social reformer and a patriot in the true sense.

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

—Srinath Singh

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was often called the 'Lion of the Punjab'. Rulers of surrounding kingdoms and even the British rulers of India, at that time, trembled at his roar.

In 1780 when he was born, Punjab was divided into numerous small kingdoms, twelve of which belonged to the Sikhs. His father Mahasingh was the 'Sardar' (leader) of one of them. He wanted to unite all the twelve kingdoms and make one large Sikh kingdom - but he failed.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was just twelve years old when his father died. From a very young age, his father had sown in him the desire to become a great warrior, and no one could suppress that wish.

Maharaja Ranjit singh was not at all handsome. Small in stature, he had pox marks all over his face. He was losing sight in one eye because of small pox. Visitors who came to meet his father would sympathise over his ugliness. His father, however, was quick to retort, "I am not at all saddened by my son's looks. He does not need to be beautiful like a girl. Boys should be brave and my son shall be a brave soldier."

He would take his son Ranjit Singh for riding with him and taught him to shoot with a gun. This passion, developed in his youth, continued throughout his life. He did not have time for studies and in those days being able to read and write was not considered important for warriors.

After the death of Mahasingh, Lakhpatrai became the Dewan (Chief Minister) and Ranjit Singh's mother became his protector. Ranjit Singh was married off at a very early age. His own mother, Mother-in-law, the Dewan and all the people around him wanted to keep him like a puppet. However, after five years, at the age of seventeen, he grew out of their folds and began to run the State independently.

During that time, Shahzama ascended the throne of Afghanistan. He attacked of Punjab and captured Lahore. The Sikhs did not have the strength to fight against the Afghans. Even then Ranjit Singh returned the 12 cannons that had sunk in the floods of the Jhelum river. Shahzama knew that sooner or later Ranjit Singh would definitely fight back. He, therefore, gave back Lahore and returned.

Ranjit Singh made Lahore his capital and within a short time united all the small kingdoms to make one strong Sikh kingdom. Now, not only the British, but the Marathas and Kabulis too began to fear him. Lord Minto, the British representative, met him at Amritsar and made a treaty in 1809. It was agreed in the treaty, that Ranjit Singh would not try to extend his terriotry to the east of the Sutlej river. He honoured this agreement till the end of his life. He did not infringe on the east but in the west and north he won over a large region.

Emperor Shahsuja of Afghanistan was dethroned in 1809 and he sought refuge from Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh helped him and in return Shahsuja gave him the Kohinoor diamond. Slowly, he extended his kingdom to include Atuk, Kangra, Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar.

Despite being unlettered, what was the reason behind Ranjit Singh's success? Along with being a brave warrior, he loved and respected all mankind and all religions. Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, all were equal in his eyes. His court had people from all walks of life and all were free to approach him with their problems.

Amongst his courtiers, jamadar (group head) Khushal Singh was the most honoured. He was a Gaur Brahmin and hailed from the Meerut district. He had come to Lahore to earn a living and enrolled into Ranjit Singh's army. One night, while he was standing guard, the Maharaja was outside, strolling all alone. Khushal Singh did not recognize him and arrested the king. Next day, realizing his mistake he was filled with fear. However, Ranjit Singh was happy that he was doing his duty. Ranjit Singh made him the chief guard and appointed him as a courtier.

Just like Hindus, Muslims too were placed with great honour in his court. Chief among them was Fakir Azizuddin. Ranjit Singh trusted him so much that once he even sent Azizuddin as an Ambassador to the British.

He took care of all his subjects. Once while riding through a field he destroyed some of the crops. The farmer, not recognizing him shouted, "Hey you! Don't you know that this is Ranjit Singh's kingdom? Anybody harming a farmer here is severely punished." Thus reprimanded, Ranjit Singh went back.

He organised his army in the European way and for this he took the help of the French General Ventura and the British General Elard and Court. His army had 50 thousand cavalry and an equal number of foot soldiers. It also included 300 cannons.

At a time, when the British on the east and Kabulis on the west were trying to crush Ranjit Singh from both sides, he frustrated them with his bravery, army organization and political acumen. He built Punjab into one strong kingdom. This was considered a great success and therefore he finds his place among the great men of Indian History.

In the end, he was struck by paralysis. Slowly all his movements stopped and he lost his speech. Even in that state he would go out in his palanquin and watch his army perform the parade. He considered a well organized army to be of utmost importance for the protection of the country.

On 27th June 1839, he died from another stroke of paralysis.

After him, the Sikhs could not retain the unity of Punjab. Mistrust and enmity amongst themselves brought about the end of the Sikh kingdom. If the Sikhs had retained the unity built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the British would have left India in 1857.

Today when India is progressing as a vast independent country, we need to learn a great deal from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's character.

MIRZA GHALIB

—Arsh Malsiani

Connoisseur of Urdu literature had once written, "The Mughal rulers have given us three things — Taj Mahal, Urdu and Ghalib." Ghalib is a famous poet not only in Urdu but also in Persian.

His full name was Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan Ghalib. His grandfather Kaukan Baig Khan had fought with his own father and came away to India from Samarkand during the reign of Shah Alam. He had four sons and three daughters. Of all the three aunts, Mirza Ghalib was particularly close to one of them. Mirza Ghalib loved her to such an extent that he saw glimpses of his nine ancestors in her. He believed that as long as she lived, not one but nine of his ancestors lived near him. On her death he wrote to a friend , 'Oh Brother! I suffer the same pain as you. The aunt who I always looked upon as my mother passed away on Tuesday evening. She too looked upon me as her son. This way nine elders in the family have died, i.e. three aunts, (father's sisters), three *Chachis* (father's sister-in-laws) my father and both my grand parents. Until my aunt was alive I knew them to be alive too. Today, with her death, all nine of them have died together.'

Ghalib's father was Mirza Abdullah Baig. He was married in Agra to the daughter of Khwaja Mirza Gulamhussein Khan Kamidan. Ghalib was born in Agra in 1797 and there he spent his childhood. He writes, "Our large house is there, but now Laxmichand Seth has bought it. At the door of this house was a stone room which was very airy as it had 12 doors. This was my favourite place for sitting. Nearby was a 'khatiawali' haveli (large house) and next to Saleemshah's seat was another haveli. Attached to the 'Kala (black) Mahal' was another haveli, and beyond that was a *katra* (a small square market place). This was well known for the shepherds who came here to sell their woollen blankets. There was another market place called the Kashmiranwala and it was

on the roof of one the houses here that I used to fly kites. I had kite - fights with Raja Balwan Singh, who was the son of Raja Chait Singh of Benares. Warren Hastings had very wrongly taken away his kingdom.'

Ghalib was still young when his father, Mirza Abdullah Baig Khan, passed away. He was brought up by his uncle, Mirza Nasarullah Baig Khan. Mirza Ghalib was just eight years old when his uncle also died. Ahmad Baksh Khan, the Nawab of Loharu, was much grieved by the death of Mirza Nasarullah Baig Khan and he took pity on the orphaned children who had become completely helpless. He appealed to Lord Lake and arranged for them to receive a pension. This was to be given to the relatives of Mirza Nasarullah Baig Khan. Of the 5 thousand rupees annual pension, Mirza was to receive only Rs. 750 per year. In fact, this amount was not too small at that time.

In Agra, Mirza studied Persian from Maulavi Muhammad Muazzam and also from an Irani, Mullah Abbdursamad. What influenced him more than his teachers was the ambience. The area, in which Mirza spent his childhood, was known as Gulab-khana. At that time it was considered to be the centre of Persian language.

Without his father's or uncle's guardianship Ghalib was immersed in the fun and frolic of youth. There was no one to stop him and there are many references of this in his writings. At the age of thirteen he was married to an eleven year old Umrao Begum. She was the daughter of Ilahibaksh Khan 'Maruf' who was the younger brother of Nawab Ahmadbaksh Khan. In those days, marriages took place at a young age and 2-3 years after his marriage Ghalib came to stay permanently in Delhi. About his marriage Ghalib has mentioned in one of his writings, 'A chain (wife) has been put around my feet and Delhi has been declared as my prison.'

As long as Ghalib was in Agra he never faced any financial constraints, in fact, he had surplus money. In Delhi the pension of 750 rupees had became a pain in his neck - sometimes on and sometimes off. Even when he did get it, the amount was barely sufficient for him. He realized that he had been cheated in fixation

of his pension. He decided to travel to Calcutta for justice. There was no railway then and after travelling by horse for most of the journey he reached Calcutta. In between he had to travel by boats and horse carriages too. In Calcutta, he did not succeed in getting justice. On the contrary he created bad relationship with the literary circle there. His tiffs with Mirza Kateel and his students, are well known.

Ghalib's court case for a just pension continued for 16 years. He spent a large amount on his case and he had taken most of the money as loan with interest. Unfortunately, he lost the case and spent the rest of his life repaying the loan.

Ghalib was a very self respecting and proud man. Just a single incident is a good example. Once, he was offered the post of 'Head of Department' for Persian, in Delhi College, but he refused. When the Lt. governor of the region Mr. Thomson, came to see the college he sent for Mirza Ghalib. The next day Ghalib went to his bungalow in a palanquin and on reaching there he waited to be ushered in. When after a long wait, someone came and said, "please come in", Mirza replied, "I can do so only when someone comes to escort me in."

On hearing this, Thomson himself came out and said, "As you are here in connection with your job and not a formal meeting, it was not necessary to send someone to escort you."

Mirza replied, "I want a job in order to raise my respect, not to lower the one that is already there." Saying this, he ordered his bearers to turn back.

Mirza Ghalib came to the court of Emperor Zafar on 4th July 1850. The Badshah gave him the title of Nazmuddaula Dabeerulmulk Nizam Jung. A monthly salary of Rs 50 was fixed. Compared to Ghalib's requirements this amount was very petty and that too he used to get it after an interval of 6 months! For first six months he somehow managed but in 1857, he sent an appeal—

'I am you servant and I roam naked.
I am your servant and I eat on credit.
If I get my salary each month

Life would not be so tough.
May you stay safe and sound for 1000 years
May every year have 50,000 days.

After the Revolt of 1857, even this amount began to dwindle. The Nawab of Rampur, Yusuf Ali Khan was a well known disciple of Mirza Ghalib. In 1859, he had fixed a salary of Rs. 100 for Mirza Ghalib. This too did not solve his monetary problems and he continued cribbing about his dire straits. He had started drinking regularly and this only increased his debts. As he grew old, his health too began to fall and his expenses became more than his earnings. He mentions these problems in a letter, "This month my 72nd year has started. Breakfast in the morning seven almonds with root juice, in the afternoon about a seer of thick mutton broth, around evening sometimes three fried kabab, at night Rs. 5 worth of drinks and an equal amount of arkesheer. I am so weak that I cannot even get up. If I do manage to crawl up somehow, my legs start trembling.......earning is Rs. 160 and expenditure is Rs. 300. A shortfall of Rs. 140 every month. Tell me, is life not tough?"

On 15 February, 1869, Mirza Ghalib died in the late afternoon. Ghalib had taken Persian poetry to great heights in our country. It was Ghalib who had also broken the shackles of Urdu prose and poetry to give it a new foundation. Many have tried to copy Ghalib but no one has been successful.

Mirza had seven children, girls and boys but none lived more than 15 months. He adopted his wife's nephew Mirza Arif. He too died before Mirza in 1852.

Mirza himself was the son of a rich man and he moved among the rich. He was the Master of many Emperors and Nawabs in terms of living style. Putting up a show of richness had become a habit for him. Like the wealthy people of Delhi, at home he wore pyjamas and broad sleeved *kurta* or *angarkha*. On his head, he normally wore an embroidered cap made up of fine cotton. In winters, to protect himself from the cold he wore pyajama and Mirjai made of some warm cloth. When he went out, he wore starched pyajamas, kurta and above that a *sadri*. On that, he wore a *choga* made of some expensive cloth and on top of that, he wore

a *jama*. On his feet he wore shoes with a curved front and he held a walking stick with an ornamental handle an which was carved his name : Asadullah Al Ghalib.

Ghalib was well built with well formed arms and legs. Standing erect and broad chested, he had an acquiline nose, filled out cheeks and thick long lashes covering large brown eyes. He had large ears and was of a fair complexion. In his youth he shaved off his beard but when he started greying, he stopped shaving his beard and moustache.

The letters and passages that he wrote to his friends, peers and relatives have been collected together and published as 'Urdu-e-muallah', 'Ude Hindi' and 'Makatibe Ghalib'. His collection of urdu poems in 'Diwan-e-Ghalib' is well-known all over the world. Humour ran in his veins and rarely did he speak without some touch of wit and humour. Among his followers were people of all religions and beliefs and they included Maulana Hali Bahadurshah Jafar. The main characteristic of his poems is that he had forsaken the old form and created a new style. His ghazals are still popular amongst the people and their themes include psychology, different moods of man, the altercation with god and the lover and of course valuable examples of wit and humour.

SWATI TIRUNAL

—Lili Omcherry

KERALA has forever been famous for its musical tradition. This is because singing has established an important place in the social and religious lives of the people there. For this very reason, dance and music has flourished there. Another reason for the all round development of these arts has been the many rulers who were themselves connoisseurs and masters of these arts. One such ruler was the king of Tiruwankur, Swati Tirunal Ram Verma.

Swati Tirunal was born on 16th April, 1813. At the young age of thirteen, he had mastered several languages viz Malayalam, Sanskrit, Persian, English, Telugu, Marathi, Kannada and Hindi. At sixteen, he ascended the throne and ruled for about eighteen years.

In this short period he tried hard to bring about an all round development of his kingdom and its subjects. During his reign there was peace and prosperity in his kingdom. Today he is famous not only as a successful and benevolent king, but also a person of high intellect, an artist and a great patron of music. He had expert knowledge of the *Vedas* and *Puranas* and was a poet of high calibre too. Like Harsha and Bhoja, Swati Tirunal too showed truly that a poet can be far more respected than a king. He well understood the composition and style of both Hindustani and Carnatic music. Be it *kirtan* or *varnam, padam* or *tillana, dhrupad* or *khayal*, and no matter in what raga, Swati Tirunaal sang them all with equal skill. It has been over a century since this royal artist has left his stamp on the Hindustani language and music. During his time he helped many an artist to progress and with his compositions, further stream lined Hindustani music.

Swati Tirunal composed approximately 350 songs which are sung even to this day. He helped enrich not only the *kirtanam* but also the *padam, varnam* and the *tillana.* Swati Tirunal's Carnatic music compositions show a distinct influence of saint Tyagraj. At

that time the *sopan* style of music was prevalent at Travancore. The Maharaja brought about great change in that style and this new style continues in the temples of that region even to this day. People at Travancore were unaware of Hindustani music. The credit for making it popular in the south goes to Maharaja Tirunal. Giving both styles equal importance he improved Carnatic music to a great extent. Swati Tirunal depicted his emotions very aptly through his lyrics, and at the same time composed it with a beautiful tune and rhythm. In this way he did a great service to music.

Carnatic music compositions may be divided into five sections. They are — *kirtanam, prabandham, varnam, padam* and *tillana.*

The Maharaja composed the *kirtanams* mostly praising the household deity. Most important of these are the 'Navratri' and 'Navaratnamala' *kirtanams.* There are nine songs, in the 'Navratri kirtanam', which are sung every year during Dusshera. The 'Navratnamala' is a string of nine songs which refer to the 'Navdha' school of devotion mentioned in the Bhagawata. Next in importance are the approximately 35 'Dhan *kirtanams*'. A special characteristic to be noted in these famous *kirtanams* is the beautiful way in which the notes have been used. Swati Tirunal composed many *prabandhams, varnams, padams* and *tillanas* in Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam.

Of his Hindustani compositions, only 37 have been found and printed. These include *dhrupad, khayal* and *tappa*. Two of his most beautiful *dhrupads* are 'Nand Nand Braj Purna' in *raga* 'Dhaneshri' and 'Chaliye kunjan mein tum' in *raga* 'Sarang'. There is yet another Ragamala in the *dhrupad* style which refers to different *ragas.* All this goes to show that the Maharaj had equal hold on the Carnatic as well as Hindustani style of music. The *khayal*, about a dozen, composed by him are famous for their sweet melody. The purity and sweetness found in Meera *bhajans* are clearly visible in Maharaj's *bhajans* too, particularly in 'Baajat badhayee nagari Raghurayee' and 'Ramchandra Prabhu'. He has composed songs in many different *ragas,* some of them in specific Maratha and Hindustani *ragas.* Having had a hold on many of the Indian languages, he has composed songs in at least seven

different languages. More than two-thirds of there *kirtananss* are in sanskrit. Swati Tirunal has also written a scholarly book on alliteration and rhyming .

Maharaj did a great service to art and literature by giving shelter to deserving artists. Musicians from Delhi, Gwalior and Mysore were a permanent feature in his court. They all drew great inspiration from him. Mairu Swami and Badi Belu, the two great exponents of music, too honoured his court with their presence.

The great vocalist Govind Merar and composer Iryimman Thamni were among others who enjoyed his royal patronage. He also founded a Council of Musicians.

Maharaj died at the young age of 34. He was a popular ruler who had won the love and affection of his people.

In short, Maharaja Swati Tirunal was a person of diverse talents. He was a linguist, a musician and a composer. But above all, he was a proud and religious ruler. Swati Tirunal is considered amongst the most popular rulers of Travancore.

TATYA TOPE

—Srinath Singh

Tatya Tope was a brave soldier of India. In the uprising of 1857, he fought bravely against the British. In those days, his name was more famous in England than that of well-known English Generals.

Born in 1814, his real name was Ramchandra Pandurang Tope. His father, Pandurang Bhatt, was the Head of the Donation Department of Baji Rao Peshwa. According to a treaty with the British, Baji Rao Peshwa came to stay in Bithoor and brought Pandurang Bhatt along with him. Thus, Bajirao's adopted son, Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope became childhood friends.

At the time of the 1857 uprising, Tatya Tope was working as an ordinary clerk under Nana Saheb Peshwa. After the defeat of the British in Kanpur, when Nana Saheb Peshwa became the ruler, Tatya Tope continued in the same post. However, when the British recaptured Kanpur after defeating Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope put down his pen to pick up the sword.

He advised Nana Saheb to leave Bithoor and go to Fatehpur, while he himself kept fighting with the British forces. He reorganized Nana's defeated force and once again took over Bithoor. This news reached General Havlock who was engaged in war in Lucknow. He stopped that battle and rushed to Kanpur. There he raged a bitter war between the troops of Tatya Tope and Havlock. Tatya was defeated in this war. The British forces managed to overpower Tatya's army. Behind him, was the Ganges river in full flood. Leaving a handful of soldiers fighting the British troops, he, along with the remaining soldiers jumped into the river. Thus, it was that on 16th August, Tatya Tope and his surviving army reached Fatehpur. There he gathered a new group of soldiers once more and leaving them under the leadership of Nana, himself went to Kalpi. Here too he gathered an army and took over the fort

of Kalpi. In the battle of Kalpi all the Indian soldiers in the British troops came over to join Tatya Tope. Nana Saheb's troops too joined them. Together they attacked the British troops in Kanpur. After three days of terrible fighting, once more they were able to take control of Kanpur. Then British troops from Lucknow and Allahabad marched towards Kanpur. Tatya and Nana stood firm against them, but under the relentless pressure of British troops, their forces started depleting. So Tatya left Nana Saheb to face them and himself went to Kalpi in order to organize fresh forces. From Lucknow, General Campbell advanced towards Kanpur. After a bitter struggle in the first week of December, the British troops took control over Kanpur. Nana Saheb escaped towards Shajahanpur and, thereafter it became impossible for him to meet Tatya Tope anywhere.

After reaching Kalpi Tatya Tope organised a big force. His intention was to attack those British troops from behind which were after Nana Saheb Peshwa. But at the same time Rani Laxmibai was preparing to fight with British General Sir Hugh Rose in Jhansi. Sir Hugh Rose attacked Jhansi on 24th March. After eight days of bitter fight Rani Laxmibai requested Tatya Tope to help her. Tatya abandoned the idea to march towards Lucknow and proceeded to Jhansi to assist Rani Laxmibai. That time he had more than 14,000 soldiers with him. He was far off from Jhansi. But to show Rani Laxmibai that he was on his way to help her he burnt the forest of high mountains. Seeing this, Rani Laxmibai and her soldiers were inspired. In the night he wanted to attack the troops of Sir Hugh Rose from behind. But Sir Hugh Rose came to know of his plans. His cannons kept on firing at the fort of Jhansi in the front while at the back also he stationed several big cannons which started firing at Tatya's troops. Tatya's soldiers marched ahead despite such a furious attack on them. Their aim was to capture the cannons of Sir Hugh Rose. In his daredevil attempt most of Tatya's soldiers died and he had to beat retreat. Rani Laxmibai kept on fighting with the troops of Sir Hugh Rose even when Tatya's help could not reach her. She could have definitely defeated Sir Hugh Rose but for a few traitors of Jhansi who opened a Southern Gate of the fort. British troops found an

entrance to the Fort. Seeing no other way Rani Laxmibai came out of the fort and joined Tatya in Kalpi. Now Sir Hugh Rose marched towards Kalpi. In Kalpi, Tatya Tope thought up a plan to include the forces of Gwalior with him and after capturing Gwaliar start fighting from there.

King Scindia of Gwalior was on the side of British. Seeing Tatya, the troops of Scindia revolted and in June, 1858 Tatya captured the Fort of Gwalior. Scindia escaped from there. With Scindia on his side Sir Hugh Rose attacked Gwalior. The fight went on for several days. Meanwhile, the ambers of the revolt have died down at several places. British forces had captured Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow and Allhabad. British troops from all these places were marching towards Gwalior. Rani Laxmibai gave her life while fighting with British troops in Gwalior. At that time also Tatya had an army of 14000 soldiers. He decided to open a new front of fight against British troops after reaching Nagpur. British troops never wanted Tatya to cross river Narmada. He succeeded in crossing the Narmada and reached Nagpur. Due to the failure of the revolt Tatya Tope did not receive the support he was hoping for, from Nagpur. Once more he crosed the Narmada river and began a guerilla warfare. He began to get surrounded by British troops on all sides but all efforts to capture him failed.

In the meantime the flames of revolution died down and most revolutionaries gave themselves up. Tatya Tope once more took up arms. He knew the dense jungles of Central India very well. There were days when he travelled sixty or more miles through rivers and dales, mountains and valleys with his guerilla troops to evade the British. It was impossible for the British soldiers to capture him as they never knew where and when Tatya Tope would attack them. The British then resorted to cunning and talked to Tatya's close friend Sardar Man Singh. They promised him full pardon and the kingdom of Narwar if he helped in capturing Tatya. Man Singh got tempted. While hiding in the jungles of Parom he lead the British soldiers to a sleeping Tatya in the middle of the night. The next day he was brought to the camp of a British Major. He was bound by heavy chains on the legs and continuously questioned for three days. He replied to all questions in Hindi.

Taking the suggestion of an Englishman, he had his diary written. Tatya's case came up in the army court. In his court statement he said, "Whatever I have done was by the order of my *Guru*. Apart from the battlefield neither me, nor Nana have ever killed an Englishman. I know that I will not get justice in the Englishman's court. Beyond this I do not want to be involved in any way with this case."

The British army court ordered him to be hanged and Tatya welcomed the decision with a smile. He was put to the gallows on 18^{th} April, 1859. Very calmly he ascended the final steps and put the hangman's noose around his neck with his own hands. He was asked to speak out his last wish. Tantiya said, "My aged father and my family have nothing to do with my activities. They should not be harassed in any way because of me."

Thus Tatya ended his life's run on a hangman's noose. Under foreign rule the greatest reward that his patriotism got him was that they left his body on the gallows till sunset. When the guards finally left, British soldiers fell on him and plucked out his hair to keep as mementos.

Tatya Tope's sacrifice ignited the flame of independence in numerous Indian hearts, a flame no one could extinguish.

LAXMIBAI

—Savitri Devi Verma

RANI Laxmibai is one of those brave women, whose name goes down in history, because of their independent and never-say-die nature. The rebellion of 1857 was in reality a battle for India's independence. In the words of Subhadra Kumari Chauhan—

"So we have heard from the wandering story tellers of Bundelkhand.

It was the Rani (queen) of Jhansi who fought bravest of all"

The Maharani (queen) was the life and inspiration of that war. Sir Hugh Rose wrote in his diary, in the praise of Rani Laxmibai, "The Maharani's high birth, her extreme care for the soldiers and others under her, and her unwavering patience at the time of great difficulties altogether made her an invincible adversary for us. She was the bravest and greatest of our enemies." A writer had compared her patriotism to that of Joan of Arc from France.

Unfortunately, none of her people understood her worth. If Rao Saheb and others had accepted her leadership, the uprising of 1857 would not have gone down in history as mutiny.

Though a woman, Laxmibai was well versed in the art of warfare. She dared to face the bullets of her enemy and roared like a lioness in the battlefield. Despite her beautiful and feminine looks she managed to frustrate her enemies with her war strategies. She was a devoted wife and a loving mother too. After her husband's death she continued to do his duties till her last breath. Even in battle, at times, she carried their adopted son Damodar Rao, strapped to her back.

She was a religious woman but never narrow-minded or rigid. She had Muslim and Pathan soldiers in her army whom she considered highly trustworthy. Under her rule, Hindus and Muslims fought side by side. Sighting this example, Sir Edwin compared her to brave Queen Bodishia of England.

Another incident of her bravery took place at the time when the Peshwas were ruling over Pune. There was a Maratha Brahmin named Krishnarao Tambey in the court. He was a trusted person of the Peshwas. His son Balwantrao Tambey was a high officer in the Peshwa's army. His grandson Moropant had a daughter named Manubai, around whom this story revolves.

The British had dethroned Bajirao Peshwa, and placed Chimnaji Appa on the throne of Pune. They wanted to keep him as a puppet ruler but he had great self respect. Taking his entire family, Moropant left for Kashi (Benares). It was there that on 19th November, 1835 Laxmibai was born. The astrologers predicted that her horoscope showed a royal future.

As a child, Laxmibai was called Manikarnika or Manubai. She was only four years old when her mother Bhagirathibai passed away. Moropant came to Bajirao with his daughter. From that very young age, Manubai was fearless and at the same time simple and beautiful. She was loved by one and all in the court and affectionately called *'Chhabili'*. Manubai spent her childhood days playing with the Peshwa's adopted son Nana Saheb. She was as good as Nana in archery, horse riding, swimming and even in academics. She was very sensitive and poets had this to say of her —

"Laxmi or Durga, she herself was the epitome of bravery,

Seeing her swordsmanship the Marathas were joyous,

Mock battles, organising the army and hunting,

Caputring soldiers, breaking forts, - all these were her favourite games."

Manubai grew like the waxing moon. When she was just 7-8 years old she looked like a beautiful and mature girl. It was right at that time that Dixit, the royal astrologer from Jhansi was paying a visit. Moropant requested him to look for a suitable groom for his daughter. Dixit was impressed with her horoscope and on his return to Jhansi, spoke highly of her to Maharaj GangadharRao. The Maharaj married Manubai and renamed her Laxmibai.

At this time, India was faced with a dire situation. The East India Company was increasing its power all around. Leaving a few

States, most of India had come under the Company. The Delhi throne had become weak. The Sikhs in Punjab, The Nawab of Bengal and the Peshwas of Maharashtra had all accepted subordination. By hook or by crook, often because there was no direct heir, the Company had taken over many States. The Company had taken to interfering in all spheres of the common man's life– Whom to meet, who to marry and even permission for adoption had to be taken from the Company officials. Gangadhar Rao too had become a puppet in the hands of these officials. A British army was stationed in Jhansi and it was the duty of the Indian ruler to maintain it. However, even under such difficult times, Gangadhar thought only about the welfare of his people. The State was freed from deft and he spent for the comfort and happiness of his subjects. In his kingdom, good workers were appointed. Many learned men gathered in his court. He wielded considerable influence even in the States surrounding Jhansi.

Having settled the state matters to some extent, Maharaj Gangadhar, together with Laxmibai, went on a pilgrimage. On their return, she gave birth to a son. The entire state celebrated with fireworks. Gangadhar thought to himself - now that I have a son to inherit my kingdom after me, Dalhousie cannot claim Jhansi. Unfortunately, God willed otherswise. Even before completing three months, his son died and Gangadhar fell into a deep depression. Within a short time, he became totally bedridden. A few days before he died, he adopted the young Anandrao from amongst his relatives. The child was renamed Damodar Rao, and he requested the company government to accept him as the next heir of Jhansi.

After his death in 1854, the head of the Company sent a *'farmaan'* (order), that they would not recognise Gangadhar's adopted son. Jhansi, not having a direct heir to its throne would be merged with the British Empire in India. They also decided that the Queen would be given an annual pension of 60 thousand rupees. She would also have to leave the fort and stay in the city palace.

Laxmibai's heart sank within her. Where Peshwas had bowed down and the Delhi Emperor turned to puppets, what could a

woman do before such a might? Anybody, the ruler or the ruled, whoever tried to revolt against the company government was immediately crushed. It is said that pain beyond limits becomes a medicine unto itself, and when people are tested beyond all limits, their patience gives way to an outburst. The Revolt of 1857 was such an outburst. It was not just a military uprising, one and all took part in it. Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope, Bahadur Shah and Rani Laxmibai were the central flames of this revolt. Meerut, Delhi, Benares, Patna and Bundelkhand became the different centres of this uprising.

Normally, Rani Laxmibai spent her time in prayers and meditation. However, she decided to spend the last days of her life not as a helpless widow, but as a truly patriotic woman. Thus, she began practising to wield the sword and ride a horse.

It was on 4th June, 1857, that Hawaldar Gurubaksh Singh first raised the flag of revolt in Jhansi. Placing the reins of the State in the hands of Laxmibai, this brave group of soldiers went forth spreading the flames of revolt against the Company officials. In their excitement to snatch their rights from the British, they killed several innocent people, but the queen was in no way involved in this.

An Englishman, named Martin, managed to escape from the revolutionaries. He wrote to Damodar Rao, the queen's adopted son, "Your mother has been treated cruelly and unjustly. No one knows the truth of the situation as well as I do. She had no hand in the killing of Europeans in June 1857."

Laxmibai was amongst those brave women who could rise up to any crucial situation. She had been through lots of ups and downs in life. Though born to a poor Brahmin household, she rose to be a queen. Fate snatched away her son and her husband, the British seized her kingdom, but Laxmibai did not lose hope. She remained alert and ever ready to evolve according to the forthcoming situations. While holding the reins of her kingdom, she gave priority to the welfare and happiness of her subjects. She organised the army and also the armoury for the proper protection of her kingdom. Noting her capabilities, an Englishman, Mr. Taylor, had written,

"Rani Laxmibai rules steadfastly with patience and determination in accordance to her designation." Mr. Gillen had described her charismatic personality and appearance in his work, thus, "The queen wore a golden cumerbund (waist band) on her robe. An engraved silver pistol made in Damascus hung from there. Next to it hung a poisonous claw. Instead of a sari, she wore loose Pyjamas. In these clothes, people often mistook the beautiful queen for a young man.

Rani Laxmibai had barely taken over the throne, when Sadashivrao staked claim for the throne of Jhansi. He took up residence at Karera and proclaimed himself to be the King of Jhansi. She put down this rebellion but barely had time to take a breath before Nathe Khan, Chief Minister of Orcha attacked Jhansi with 20,000 soldiers. The Rani, however, won the battle on the strength of her supporters.

Till then the officers of the Company were busy putting down the revolts in northern India. Having taken care of that, General Hugh Rose and the other officers realized that unless the Rani of Jhansi was done away with, the rebellion in Central India could not be crushed. In fact, many of the officers were of the opinion that Jhansi was the seat of all the revolts. Thus, under Sir Hugh Rose's instructions, a huge army came and surrounded Jhansi. Having got news of the preparations, Rani Laxmibai also began to prepare. She vacated all the areas around Jhansi so that the British forces did not get food or drink. Unfortunately, her plans failed as the Raja of Tikamgarh and Scindia provided the soldiers and officers with all facilities.

In this battle, Rani Laxmibai, took the reins of her army. It had 15 cannons. Of these, special mention must be made of the cannons named *'Karak bijli', 'Ghan garjan',* and *'Bhawani Shankar'*. Ghous Khan was a trusted cannon shooter of Rani. He was a brave and courageous soldier. The army comprised of brave men from Bundelkhand and equally brave Afghan fighters. Night after night, Rani stayed awake and looked after the arrangements all around. Whenever the battle front broke, Rani herself managed to stabilise it. The battle raged on fiercely. The keeper of the main

entrance to the fort, Khudabaksh, and Ghous Khan, the person in charge of the cannons, were both killed. A cannon ball hit the store for gunpowder and there was a terrible explosion in which numerous brave soldiers were killed. In the city, the enemy troops had gone on a rampage, killing and looting everything. The people ran for their lives. Rani Laxmibai had asked Tatya Tope for help. However the British troops had surrounded her in such a way that chances of anyone coming to help her was next to impossible. Holding the reins in her mouth and a sword in each hand Rani jumped into the battlefield. The battle raged for 12 days. When the resources dwindled, the Sardars tried to explain to Rani that continuing the battle was impossible.

'Jhansi will be left in the hands of the enemies', this thought filled Rani Laxmibai with great sadness. In a helpless state she called her soldiers and said, "You all may leave this place to save your lives. I shall sit on this pile of gunpowder and light a fire, for till my last breath I will not leave Jhansi."

The experienced Sardars reasoned with her that it was necessary for her to stay alive in order to continue the freedom struggle. She thought to herself, "From now on I have to fight not only for Jhansi but for the freedom of whole of India." Having decided this she strapped her adopted son to her back and set out. Next day, the remaining soldiers went down fighting bravely.

Running and hiding in the darkness, Rani Laxmibai reached Bhandare, a village 21 miles from Jhansi. As soon as Sir Hugh learnt that Rani had escaped, he sent a select group of soldiers after her. When this group reached Bhandare, Rani was having her meal. As soon as she saw the British horseman coming from far, she left her meal unfinished and again with her son tied to her back she rode out. Lieutenant Walker stopped her on the way. She struck him with her sword and he fell to the ground. Seizing the opportunity, she gave the horse full head. Racing on at full speed for a hundred miles she reached the gates of Kalpi fort at midnight.

At that time, Nana Saheb's brother, Rao Saheb, was at the fort. He welcomed her into the invincible fort of Kalpi. It held a large

stock of ammunition and contingent of troops also. The only thing lacking was a strong leader to take charge and organise everything. Everyone was very happy and hopeful that Rani Laxmibai's coming would fill that gap. Then the Nawab of Banda and the king of Baanpur too joined them with their own troops.

Rani Laxmibai well understood the importance of organisation strategy and other things pertaining to war. However Rao Saheb and the others felt it below their dignity to work under a woman. As a result, when the army faced the British troops at Konch, a place not far from Kalpi, the lack of leadership forced the Kalpi troops to back out. Once again the Rani's advice was ignored, else this revolt would have been solved in Kalpi itself.

Even without any support, Rani did not back out of her responsibilities. With the help of 250 horsemen she went to protect the banks of the Yamuna. Unfortunately the troops of Rao Saheb were so disorganised that when the British troops attacked from the rear they scattered away in chaos. Seeing the battle going out of hand, Rani struck like lighting on the ammunition store. The enemy's Store-in-Charge panicked and fled. However, with fresh troops joining them, they continued in full force again. Unable to face the renewed troops the Peshwa's troops fled the battlefield.

Rao Saheb's supporters, left Kalpi and took refuge at Gopalpur, 46 miles away from Gwalior. By then Tatya Tope had also joined the group. Despite this, all of them together could not decide what to do next. The brave Rani came up with a solution. She said, "We could only rely on Kalpi, but that is out of our hands now. Until and unless we have enough arms and ammunitions stored up in the fort, we can never succeed against the British. The only solution for us is to capture the fort of Gwalior. Though Maharaj Jayajirao and his ministers are pro-British, his troops are completely anti-British."

United, they all marched towards Gwalior. Rao Saheb was of the opinion, that Scindia being a ruler under the Peshwa would welcome him. Blissful in their ignorance, they were taken aback when suddenly Scindia attacked them. There was chaos and confusion all around. How could Rani let her planning go awry?

She became like a lioness and taking her 250 trusted soldiers attacked the artillery of Scindia. Seeing Rani Laxmibai's, courage, the young Jayajirao too got agitated. Both sides fought hard. Rani was fighting for the independence and respect of her country, whilst Jayajirao was doing so to please the British. Rani became like Goddess Durga and created havoc among the enemy troops. At the right moment, Tatya Tope too attacked from the other side. Having been pressurised from both sides, Scindia fled towards Dhaulpur and, thereafter, to Agra into the protection of the British. Gwalior fort was captured. Nana Saheb was declared the Peshwa. Having taken over the fort along with its wealth, and drunk with power, everyone lost their alertness. They became busy in celebrations - unware of the looming dangers. The leader, drunk with the taste of victory, felt that he had won complete independence. Rani could only watch and feel sorry.

On the other side, the British were completing their preparations. Under the leadership of Sir Hugh Rose and Colonel Napier, the British captured Murar. Rao Saheb's soldiers were resting after the celebrations when the enemy troops attacked. Now, it was too late. The battle was won but it slipped out of their hands. They were surrounded by bad luck on all sides. Rani grieved to see all her hopes and wishes shattered.

Tragedy looked on with a smile. Rao Saheb was full of airs though vanquished. Despite everything, Rao Saheb still felt proud to be a descendent of the Peshwa. Why should he allow a mere woman to head the army? Rani, from her side took all precautions. She stationed troops on all roads leading to Gwalior. She guarded eastern side herself. Dressed in man's garb and in full armour, she sat astride a trained horse. With her trusted bodyguards and her two battle experienced companions, Mandawara and Kashi, she went into the battlefield. On both sides, flashing swords clashed. The battlefield rang with the sounds of cannon-firing, shouts of "Kill! the enemy" and the whining of horses. It was as if the earth quenched its thirst with blood. It became impossible for Sir Hugh Rose's troops to penetrate through Maharani's troops. Rani's trusted Pathan soldiers badly defeated the British troops. However, the

enemy troops were well equipped and organised. Replacements reached and they fought back with renewed vigour. Rani became agitated to see her troops back out. With a roar she sprang to the forefront. The troops got inspired, and fought back once more. Seeing Brigadier Smith turn towards another way, Rani went and stopped him. It was almost sunset. Rani's troops had won the day. The British troops backed out and for that day the crown of victory fell on Rani's head. However, her beloved horse was grievously injured in this battle.

Next day too, the terrible battle raged on and numerous soldiers on either side laid down their lives. On the third day, Sir Hugh Rose attacked with full force. Concentrating only on Rao Saheb's troops, he attacked them with great ferocity. One after the other he destroyed both of Rao Saheb's army units. This was mainly due to the loose organisation of the troops. The Peshwa's troops were completely routed. Rani bravely went forward and was soon surrounded by British troops. She was seen fighting in their midst with a sword held in each hand. Whoever came in front of her flashing blades, was swiftly put to death. For a brief moment the enemy troops were stunned and seizing the opportunity, Rani along with 10-12 of her companions escaped from their clutches. When Colonel Smith realized that Rani had escaped, he sent a select group of men after her. Rani along with her two trusted friends rode on at full speed. Shots were being fired on both sides and Rani was hit on the leg. She did not falter but holding her sword aloft continued riding with Damodar strapped to her back. She did not let the enemy come anywhere near her. She was defending herself from a soldier when she heard her beloved friend scream. She turned around and struck off the soldier's head with a single blow. She took up the reins once more but this time the soldiers were hot in pursuit. Before her lay a large drain. As her own horse had been injured, Rani was riding a new horse which refused to jump across the drain. Only a handful of her companions remained. They fought on for sometime, but a British soldier came up from behind and struck Rani on the head and chest. Even while dying, she managed to kill him.

Whilst some kept the enemy troops busy, Ramchandra Rao, Rani's trusted bodyguard, took her body to a nearby hut and lit her pyre there. Of all those who went down fighting in the Revolt of 1857, the only one to die fighting in the battlefield was Rani Laxmibai. She died at the young age of 23. Being a woman makes her life all the more commendable; it would make any woman proud. Her name shall forever be etched in the history of our country.

In the words of famous poetess Subhadra Kumari Chauhan—

"Rani was dead, and her pyre was her divine ride.
One spark dissolved into another, she was the rightful owner of the divine glow.
She was just twenty three years old, not a human but a super human
She came to infuse life in us, holding the torch of independence
She had shown us the way and taught us a lesson.
So we have heard from the wandering story tellers of Bundelkhand
It was the 'Rani of Jhansi' who fought bravest of all.

NANA SAHEB PESHWA

—Srinath Singh

1857 saw terrible and wide spread battles all over India.The British called it sepoy mutiny. In truth, it was the first war of Independence. It was fought in the name of the last Mughal king Bahadur Shah, but the real leader was Nana Saheb Peshwa.

Nana was the adopted son of Bajirao II, who had signed a treaty with the British in 1818. According to it, he had handed over his entire kingdom and all his powers to the British in return for eight lakh rupees per year. He had also agreed to go and stay at Bithoor, a place near Kanpur. At that time Nana's parents were staying in Maharashtra. In 1824, Nana was born there in a village called Venu. His father was Madhavrao Narayan Bhatt and his mother Gangatai. They did not like to live in the State that was ruled by the British. Thus, in 1827 they travelled to Bithoor, to stay there with Bajirao. Nana was a beautiful and lovable child of two and a half years. That very year in June Peshwa pronounced him as his adopted son. Thus, a simple village child became the heir to the seat of Peshwa and began to be brought up appropriately.

As he grew older and began to read the history of the Marathas under the Peshwas and how they had flourished, he felt sad. There was a time when under the rule of Peshwa Balaji Bajirao, the Maratha kingdom extended from the Arabian sea to the Bay of Bengal. From Bengal alone they collected an annual *'chauth'* (cess) of Rs. 12 lakhs. Now, Peshwa Bajirao was staying in Bithoor with just Rs. 8 lakhs as pension having given up everything to the British. This humiliation had stained the reputation of Bajirao. Nana had made up his mind to wipe out this stain even if he had to sacrifice his life.

Nana was supported by Rani Laxmibai and Tatya Tope. All three made plans to fight the British and drive them out of the country.

Peshwa Bajirao II died in 1851. He had made a will transferring all his property and his pension to Nana on his death. But the British did not accept Nana as the rightful heir to the pension. Even if he had continued receiving the pension, he would have fought the British and stopping of the pension only increased his anger. He put his heart and soul into preparations for fighting the British but he did not want to act in haste. Therefore, he continued correspondence to revive the pension and on the other hand kept up his preparations.

Nana sent his lawyer Azimullah to present his case before the British authority in England. He sent a letter through him saying that Bajirao had given up his kingdom to the company, on condition that he would receive Rs. eight lakhs as annual pension. If this pension was not permanent then the company too had no right over the Peshwa territories. It is only just that both parties should honour the treaty. How is it possible that one side keeps its promise but not the other?

This letter clearly conveyed that since the pension had been stopped, Nana would fight to get back his kingdom. The British had begin to feel that their empire was invincible and that Nana could do nothing to effect them. Thus, they did not take this letter seriously and rejected Nana's appeal.

Nana Saheb Peshwa took this rejection lightly and did not give up hope. He maintained a Peshwa's lifestyle of pomp and grandeur. In Bithoor, he would call a 'durbar' (assembly of courtiers and councillors) and preside as though he was the most powerful of men. His palace was beautifully decorated. In his drawing room hung large paintings of Chatrapati Shivaji, Bajirao I, Madhavrao and Nana Fadnavis. It seemed all these great rulers were telling him, "This is the path we have walked down and you too must do so." Nana Saheb's crown was embedded with diamonds. He wore clothes made of 'Kimkhab' and covered his body with jewellery. His imposing personality and fierce shining eyes made the British officers involuntarily bow their heads before him.

Seated thus, as the Peshwa, he kept sending messages all over India, extolling the leaders to revolt against the British. He urged

the people to stand up against the English rulers, reaching out to them through the 'Maulavis and pandits' (the priests of Muslims and Hindus respectively). He sent his trusted messengers to the other rulers. The 'roti' (home made bread) and the lotus flower became symbols of the revolt. It began to be seen in every village. Whoever got the 'Roti' would make some more and sent it to other. In short it meant - 'get ready to kill and be killed.'

When Nana Saheb felt that India was ready for the uprising he came out with the excuse of going on a pilgrimage, to give his plans a final shape. His lawyer Azimullah went along with him. At that time a British judge, Moreland, came from Agra to meet Nana. Nana gave him such a warm welcome that Moreland did not get an inkling of what Nana thought or what he was going to do. Nana first went to Delhi where he met Bahadurshah. He prepared this last Mughal Emperor and his queen Zeenat Mahal to unfurl the flags of independence on 31st of May. He then went to Ambala and from there to Lucknow. There he led a procession on the streets. As he sat on an elephant, people followed him on horses, camels and even on foot. People were so impatient to revolt that they threw stones on the chief commissioner's carriage. From Lucknow, Nana Sahab went to Kalpi and there he met the revolutionary leader Kunwar Singh. At the end of April, he returned to Bithoor. The revolt for independence was to start on 31st May, but the Indian soldiers were losing patience. Meanwhile, they were given greased cartridges which had to be torn open by the teeth. the soldiers believed this to be an anti-religious motive and this further inflamed their minds. They could not wait for the 31st. On 10th May, they began the revolt in Meerut. They began to burn down British houses and kill the Englishmen. Immediately, killings began in Delhi, Lucknow and Ambala.

The British in Kanpur still believed Nana to be their friend. Seeing the cavalry and foot soldiers in Kanpur, they asked him for help. Nana came with 300 soldiers and gave them full access to the state treasury so as to protect them.Nana had organised the revolt so secretly that even now the British did not suspect him. As soon as news of the uprising spread, people in Kanpur began

to revolt. The British took their women and children to escape in their boats. The soldiers, however, began to shoot at these boats and only a few could finally escape. When all signs of the British Empire vanished from Kanpur, Nana Saheb called a 'Durbar' (royal meeting). He received 21 gun salutes and thus he came to the seat of the Peshwa on his own strength.

The British forces now began to surround him from all sides and Nana Saheb began to weaken. He was forced to leave Kanpur. For about one year he kept fighting the British, making new plans for revolts and retreating. Finally when he realized that he was fighting a lost battle, taking his few remaining soldiers, he vanished into the jungles of Nepal. Till date nobody knows where he went or what happened to him. A study of history shows that Nana was a true patriot and that he sacrificed his body, soul and wealth for the independence of his country. It was his standing order that no one should harm the English women and children. His aim was to first drive out the British and then establish a united India.

With his sacrifice, he lit such a flame of independence in the hearts of the Indian people that finally the British were forced to leave.

SAYYAD AHMED KHAN

—Jagdish Goyal

SAYYAD Ahmed Khan is among those great men of India who helped spread education and worked for the welfare of the society. He was born in Delhi on 17 October, 1817. He belonged to a religious and influential family. His father was a descendant of Mir Muttaki Hazrat Mohammad. Mir Muttaki's forefathers had escaped the torture of Ummyas and fled first to Iran and there after to Afghanistan. It is believed that the family came to India during Emperor Shajahan's reign. Since then, members of this family have held important positions in the Mughal court. However, Sayyad Ahmed Khan's father could not rise to a very high post.

At the time when Sayyad Ahmed Khan was born, the situation in Delhi had changed. The British had taken over Delhi in 1803. They had taken over all other powers but allowed the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam to maintain his royal lifestyle inside the Red Fort. He was given a lot of wealth and even allowed to have a court. Shah Alam tried to keep up the outer pomp and grandeur.

Sayyad Ahmed Khan grew up in Delhi where the pomp and show of the Mughals existed along with the spreading paws of the British empire. Many a times, Sayyad Ahmed Khan had to go to the Durbar in place of his father. Therefore, he was well-versed with the ways of the Mughal court.

As a student Sayyad Ahmed Khan was not extraordinary. He himself has admitted that compared to many other students he was not good, but physically he was much stronger than any of them. He learnt to swim and shoot arrows from his father. He had read a small part of the 'Koran' (the holy book of Muslims) and was sent to a 'Maktab' (school), where he learnt Persian and Arabic.

Of all the persons who had influenced Sayyad Ahmed Khan during his growing age, his mother occupies the highest place. Belonging to a noble family she was well aware of Persian and

Muslim culture. She brought up Sayyad Ahmed Khan under strict supervision. Writing about his mother he refers to an incident, "I was perhaps 11years old at that time. For some reason I laughed at our old servant. Incidentally, my mother saw this and was so angry that she threw me out of the house. For three days, I stayed at an aunt's place, and only after I had apologised, did she allow me back into the house."

When Sayyad Ahmed Khan was 19 years old, his father passed away and he had to take on a lot of responsibilities. Members of his family wanted him to work, like his father, in the Mughal court, but Sayyad Ahmed Khan wanted to work for the British company. Sayyad Ahmed Khan was very worldly wise. He was intelligent enough to gauge that the star of the Mughal Empire was rapidly sinking. Hali, who has written a beautiful biography on Sayyad Ahmed Khan, writes referring to this aspect, "Sayyad Ahmed Khan was brought up in the shadow of the palace and this would have been normal if he did not like the foreign rule. But he had a deep understanding of things. He had comprehended that the Mughal rule was coming to an end not just by fate but because it had weakened from within."

Sayyad Ahmed Khan started his work with the Company as a 'Sarishtedar' in the court of Delhi. 'Sarishtedar' was the official who kept the files of court cases of the British Courts in Indian languages. After a few years, he was posted as 'Munsif' in Fatehpur Sikri in Agra. Sayyad Ahmed Khan was an honest and hardworking employee, but because of his lack of knowledge of English he could not rise above the post of 'Munsif' in the small court.

The Revolt of 1857 saw a terrible upheaval all over India. This was a War of Independence which Muslims and Hindus fought together. They wanted to make Bahadur Shah, the Emperor of Hindustan once more. The Revolt was a failure. Bahadur Shah was expelled from the country and all traces of the Mughal Empire were wiped off.

During the days of the Revolt, Sayyad Ahmad Khan was a Munsif in Bijnor. He had been working on this post for 20 years and had protected the lives and property of the British with great

loyalty. He was not a blind follower of the British. He appreciated the success and growth of the Britishers and felt English education to be must. He truly believed that the Revolt had been the result of a chain of misunderstandings between the British and the Indian people. Later, he had even written a book in this context. Just, how great the effect of Revolt had in his life is explained by Hali in these words, 'Just as the sun increases the temperature of water and it spreads out, so also his blood boiled at this Revolt for Independence.'

Some historians have written that after the Revolt of 1857, the British government believed all Muslims to be their sworn enemies. Many Muslim families were tortured, numerous families destroyed. The ulemas had never accepted the British rule from within their hearts. Till then the Hindus and Muslims were working towards a united India though their religious beliefs were different. At first Sayyad Ahmed Khan too thought likewise and he compared Hindus and Muslims to the two eyes of some beautiful woman. He said if one was hurt, the other would be pained. Later on he changed his opinion, so much so that he is said to have sown the seeds of separation between the Congress and the Muslims.

In 1866, Sayyad Ahmed Khan was transferred to Aligarh. It was in Aligarh that he planned and carried out most of his campaigns. After spending four years in Aligarh, he went to England along with his two sons. In 1876 he retired from his government job. From then on till his death after 22 years he worked extremely hard and with great tenacity. The low and neglected state of the muslim society made him very sad. He used to say that the Muslims had wrapped themselves in a cloak of complacency, that they did not need to do anything. This he considered was a grave mistake. He tried with all his strength to stop the downslide of the Muslim society. One of his British friends had said in this context, 'To be able to stop the degeneration of an entire society, like a strong wall, truly this could only be the work of a prophet.'

Sayyad Ahmed Khan had come to the conclusion that to bring about a change in the Muslim society, he needed to spread English education and thoughts among them. He did a lot of work in this

direction. He started a centre for translation which came to be known as 'The Scientific Society of Aligarh'. He started publishing a monthly paper, 'Tehzeeb-un-Akhlakh'. He founded the Mohamaden-Anglo-Oriental college in Aligarh, which later on came to be known as the Aligarh Muslim University.

Apart from all this, Sayyad Ahmed Khan wrote a number of books on a variety of topics. Many of them deal with politics and education.

Sayyad Ahmed Khan received a lot of appreciation and fame in his lifetime. Viceroy, Lord Lawrence had bestowed him with a gold medal and also given him the title of 'Sir'. Sayyad Ahmed Khan was a member of the Legislative Council and he had also worked as a member of the Education Commission.

In 1898, Sayyad Ahmed Khan died at the age of 81. No matter what his political beliefs were, there is no doubt that he was an extremely hardworking, fearless and outspoken person.

ISHWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

—Nirmala Malik

This great man was born in 1820, in the Veersingh village on the border of Medinipur district. His father was Thakurdas Bandhopadhyay and his mother Bhagwati Devi. Anything which he read once was memorised by him and at the age of 11 he completed his grammar examination and entered the literature level. In this level too, he remained first and received scholarships continuously. At the age of 16, he passed the 'alankar' level. Thereafter, he passed the Vedanta, Smriti, philosophy with flying colours and awards. He could memorise books on a variety of topics and seeing his vast knowledge, learned people gave him the title of Vidyasagar (ocean of knowledge). Soon he came to be known as Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar.

Ishwarchandra was not only an ocean of knowledge but also an ocean of compassion. Once, when he was a child, a boy begged him for an anna (approx 6 paisa); Ishwarchandra asked him, "what would your do if I give you a rupee.?" He replied, "I'll buy puffed rice for 4 annas and 4 annas worth of gram. These I will sell. I will spend rest 8 annas to feed my family."

Seeing the boy's honesty, Vidyasagar was extremely impressed and gave him a rupee. The child ran away happily.

Many years passed by. One day, Vidyasagar was passing through a market when suddenly a person came and fell at his feet saying:-

"O! 'Annadata' (giver of food) you must come to my house. It is because of your compassion that today I have become such a big merchant. I recognise you only too well. That same small stature and that same style of dressing."

Vidyasagar was taken aback and said, "Brother! I do not recognise you. Tell me who are you? I have never given anything to anyone." That person then related how, with that one Rupee

which Vidyasagar game him he had started his business and progressed from a small shop to a large business. With much pleading he took Vidyasagar to his house.

After completing his education, Vidyasagar took up a teacher's job. His first job was at Fort William College for a monthly salary of Rs 50. European students used to come there to study Sanskrit and Bengali. He had thorough knowledge of English too. He was very compassionate and helpful. On his request, Lord Hardinge had started about 100 schools all over Bengal. Vidyasagar was imbued with a sense of sacrifice. At a time when he was an employee earning Rs 50 there was a vacancy in that very college for Rs 200 per month and he was selected for it. However he declined, and instead walked 60 miles to call his needy friend, Pandit Taranathji, and offered him that post.

Vidyasagar was appointed as Chief Writer in Fort William College, but within a few days he resigned and took up the job of the Principal in Sanskrit college. He wrote a report on the improvement of the college, which pleased the management so much that they increased his salary from Rs. 150 to 500 per month. Vidyasagar was a great promoter of discipline amongst teachers and students in college. He himself used to reach college before time and expected everyone else to be on time too. When he became Principal of the college, there were some professors who had been his teachers. One professor who had taught him law used to be late quite often. Vidyasagar never said anything to him and after greeting him let him go forth to his class. This daily silence unnerved the professor and one day he broke down before Ishwarchandra, "Why don't you say anything to me? I cannot take this silence anymore. From tomorrow, I shall definitely reach on time."

Thereafter, he never came late. Towards the students Vidyasagar's attitude was liberal but at the same time he was a strict disciplinarian. Once he appointed a very young Professor who, on entering the class, was insulted by the students. Ishwarchandra investigated the matter and asked for the name of the miscreants but nobody stood up. He expelled all of them. The

students complained about Ishwarchandra to the higher authorities and demanded that he be removed from the college. Earlier Ishwarchandra had once said, that instead of spending a life of humiliation, he would rather sell vegetables or have a grocery shop for a living. The students knew this and made fun of their Principal.

When Vidyasagar was questioned about his action, he wrote back, that in order to maintain the discipline of the college it was necessary that the authorities need not interfere in the matter. The management returned his paper and dismissed the complaint. Later, the students were made to apologise to the Professor as well as to Vidyasagar. Ishwarchandra was also appointed as Inspector in many districts. On his request a number of normal schools were started in Bengal and those he looked after himself. One day he had a difference of opinion with the Director of the Education Department. He felt that now onwards, nothing could be done smoothly, so he resigned from his job.

Having left his job, he turned his attention to the improvement of literature. His rise in this field was so fast, that in a single night he wrote a *Saral Subodh Sanskrit Vyakaran,* a simple and easy guide to Sanskrit Grammar. He wrote over 50 books in Sanskrit, Bengali and English. Some of his famous books are *Jeewan Charit, Bodhodai, Shakuntala, Vidhwa-Vivaha* (widow remarriage), *Varnaparichay* (introduction to letters), *Meghdoot, Bhranti-Vilas, Bahu-vivaha,* and many more.

He had an intense desire to see that no one in the country remains illiterate. As a result of his efforts, Bethune college in Calcutta and 50 other schools were established in Medinipur, Burdwan, Hooghly and Nadia districts. As the Education Department was opposed to the idea, he took upon himself the burden of maintaining them. He established 101 schools so that Bengali could be taught and for those who worked in day time, he arranged for evening classes.

In the schools established by Vidyasagar thousands of students studied free of cost. He paid not only for the books for students but also the teacher's salary.

Once an aged professor remarried a young girl after his first wife died. Ishwarchandra was opposed to this marriage. The professor was adamant and took Vidyasagar home to meet his wife. On seeing her Vidyasagar started crying aloud. The professor tried to calm him down and requested him to eat something. Ishwar left the house saying, "Leave alone food, I will not touch a drop of water in this house."

After this incident, Ishwar immersed himself in removing evil customs of Hinduism. He made special efforts to start the practice of widow-remarriage.

Ishwarchandra brought about the changes not only in the education system of the country, but also in other spheres. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's efforts had made the practice of Sati illegal. Seeing the plight of the widows, Ishwar decided to strongly advocate widow remarriage. He tried to explain to the blind followers of such rituals that widow-remarriage was very much in accordance to the religious texts. He wrote a number of books on this. He proclaimed that remarriage was not at all against the religious texts. His words had no effect on the people, and instead he made many enemies. To set an example he married his only son to a widow. A wave of social reform swept over entire Bengal. The city reverberated with praises of Vidyasagar. Though very modern in his thoughts and ideas, Vidyasagar remained simple and patriotic in his own life.

Whenever anyone was faced with difficulties, Vidyasagar made every effort to help him out. If he used to get the news of anyone's illness or misfortune, he would go to his house and try to help as much as possible.

He did not discriminate between rich and poor and met everyone equally. Once, in Calcutta, while on his way to meet an important zamindar, a shopkeeper called him. He was an ordinary man. He spread out a sack on the floor and invited Ishwar to be seated. Ishwar was calmly talking to him when the Zamindar passed by in a fabulous horse carriage. He had to get down in order to meet Ishwar but he was feeling ashamed to be in an ordinary man's shop. Next time they met, he asked Ishwar, "Why do you sit everywhere? Do you not have any self respect?"

Vidyasagar replied, "Terminate your friendship with me so that there is no reason for any complaint in future. Just for this, I cannot insult my friend who is a mere shopkeeper."

Each and every incident in the life of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar is a lesson for all of us. This great soul left for heavenly abode in the year 1891. Today, he may not be physically present in this world, but his teachings and principles live on to immortalise him.

MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT

—Annapurna Ghosh

MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT was the pioneer of free verse in Bengali literature. Born on the 25th January 1824, his life was a canvas of strange variations. He was born in the Sagardari village of Bengal. His father Rajnarayan had four wives and Madhusudan was born to his first wife. He had two brothers and a sister—all younger to him and all died in their childhood. Thus Madhusudan was the apple of his parents' eye. Rajnarayan was a successful lawyer with a fair amount of wealth.

Madhusudan was a spendthrift, a trait he had inherited from his father. From his mother, Jahnavi Devi, he inherited her literary talent of writing poetry. A talent which has made him immortal.

Young Madhusudan loved attending school and at a very young age he had decided that one day he would be a famous man. Madhusudan was a disorganized person, but he was not pride full. He could not bear to see anyone unhappy. He always came forward to help anybody in distress.

After completing his studies in the village school, his father Rajnarayan got him admitted into Hindu College, Calcutta. At that time, a wave of anti-Hindu education prevailed over India. The main aim of this education was the spread of British culture, British political thought, and love for Christianity. Being the only child of a rich father, Madhusudan was not really rooted in his culture and so in Calcutta he could not resist temptations spread around him. He quickly transformed his life style to that of the British. Apart from a change in dressing and eating habits, he mastered the English language too, and started writing English poems.

One day, when the entire household was preparing to get him married, Madhusudan ran away. On 9th February 1843, he embraced Christianity. Thereafter, he took the name Michael Madhusudan.

Due to his embracing Christianity, Madhusudan's parents could no longer let him stay at home. Though, this did not diminish their parental love for him in any way. One day, however, irritated by his audacity, Madhusudan's father stopped all financial help. This put him in a dire situation and Madhusudan had to go to Madras to earn a living. There too it was a continuous struggle. He had enough work teaching the Christian children, but the money he got was not enough. During his college life, Madhusudan had taken up writing as a hobby and now he used it to make ends meet. With time, he became well known as a writer.

Very soon, his English novel *Vandini Nari* was published. Michael Madhusudan became famous as a writer, but his childhood friends Gaurdas Basak and Lord Bethune, a well known promoter of women's education in modern India, advised him otherwise. They told him that the English literary circle would never accept any foreign writer, so it would be better if he wrote in his mother tongue, Bengali. Madhusudan's illusion was shattered and he began to learn Bengali.

In Madras, Madhusudan met and married a Scotch girl, Rebecca Myawatmis. However, because of his erratic habits, this marriage broke up. After sometime he married the daughter of the principal of Madras college. At that time Madhusudan was the assistant editor of a daily newspaper and also a teacher at the Presidency College. The money he got for all his work was not sufficient for him, so after eight years Madhusudan returned to Bengal.

During the eight years that he spent in Madras, Madhusudan's parents passed away and his relatives gave him up for dead. They had taken control of his father's property. When Madhusudan returned to Bengal, they refused to even recognize him. He found Calcutta to be new.

Penniless and shunned by the society, Madhusudan was forced to take up employment in an office. This was when he started writing plays in Bengali. His plays like 'Sharmishtha' and 'Padmavati' made him famous, but he was better known for his poems. Amongst his book of verses *Meghnath Vadh* is enough to keep him indelibly stamped in the mind of his readers.

Leaving his wife and children in Calcutta, he left for England to study law. His wife needed money, so along with their children, she too left for England. There they ran up a huge debt. No one came forth to help them. In desperation, he wrote to Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar for monetary help and with his help he completed his studies. In 1867, Madhusudan began his career as a Barrister in Calcutta High Court. Even the substantial amount earned by him now, was not enough to cover his expenses. He sank deeper and deeper into debt but never refrained from helping others.

Madhusudan's last days were mired with extreme difficulties. After his wife's death, Madhusudan died on 29th June 1873, in Alipur hospital.

DAYANAND SARASWATI

—**Pushpa Thakur**

PANDIT KARSANLALJI TRIVEDI lived in Tankara village which was in the Morwi kingdom. It was situated in the Kathiawar region of Gujarat. A son was born to him in 1824. He was named Moolshankar after the position of the planets at the time of his birth. Moolshankar was a brilliant child and worked hard at learning his lessons. At the age of eight, after his thread ceremony, he learnt many *mantras* viz. - 'Sandhya', 'Gayatri', 'Rudri', etc., by heart. All the elders were extremely happy with him. By the time he was 14, he knew the *Yajur Veda* by heart. He had developed an incredible capacity to think and analyse.

Once, on his father's request he kept a fast for Shivaratri. After singing *bhajans* and *kirtans* (songs in praise of God) till late in the night, others retired to sleep, but Moolshankar remained awake. With great sincerity he sat chanting hymns, before the statue of Shiva. Then he witnessed something which changed his entire outlook and perception on religion. He saw a small rat climb up and gnaw at the offerings to Shiva. Moolshankar thought to himself that this could not be the statue of the all-powerful Shiva. How could a statue which can be defiled by a mere mouse, protect the world? Hearing such atheist thoughts his father berated him, but the seeds of doubt had taken root in the child's mind. Soon after this incident his sister died, followed by the death of his favourite uncle and he cried bitterly. He realized that life was like a bubble which could burst any moment, so one should try to make it worthwhile. Moolshankar, immersed in deep thoughts became indifferent to the world around him. His father, fearing that he would turn his back to the world and become a *sanyasi,* (monk) prepared to bind him in marriage. Moolshankar however ran away to the Sidhpur Mela (Fair) and after shaving off his hair donned the saffron robe—thus renouncing the world. His father learnt of this and set forth to bring him back. At night while his father and

the other men were sleeping, Moolshankar crept out and went in search of yogis. He wandered around for many years till he finally came to Mathura. He stayed at the ashram of Swami Birjanand and pleased his *guru* with his devotion, service and hard work. Swami Birjanand was an extremely hot tempered person but Moolshankar, who was now renamed Swami Dayanand, learnt from him with great patience and perseverance. Finally, he completed his studies and it was time for him to take leave of his *guru*. Swami Birjanand said, "Son, the people of India are living in darkness now, I have great hopes that you will be able to show them the path. Take them away from the hypocrisy show of religion and show them the true Vedic religion. The people have forgotten the teachings of the Vedas. You must put your greatest effort to spread the teachings of the Vedas."

In those days, India was not only under foreign rule, but also entangled in evil social customs. Some people used to donate their beautiful jewellery bedecked wives to the priests at various pilgrim places in the hope that they would get similar beautiful wives and wealth in their next birth. Then they used to buy back their donated wives from the priests after paying enormous sums of money to them as if the woman was not a human being but a commodity. Some people used to offer their daughters to the temples to serve the deities. These girls used to live loathsome lives as *devdasis.* Untouchability and superstitions were rampant in the society. Women and lower caste people were not entitled to read *Vedas.* People going on foreign tours used to be excommunicated from the society. In such trying times it was not so easy to reform the society.

Keeping in mind these instructions of his guru, Dayanand travelled all over the country spreading the message that bathing in the Ganga to wash one's sins is just a myth. People believed that Yogiraj Sri Krishna was a butter thief and had 16000 queens. Swami Dayanand said that Sri Krishna was a superior being and that luxury-loving poets had misguided the people with such descriptions. Hearing such things many people became his enemies. One day a Rajput by the name of Karna Singh came to kill him

with a sword. Swamiji snatched his sword, broke it into two and flung them aside. Therafter, Karna Singh instigated some thugs working under him to kill Swamiji. None of them could face up to the Swamiji's personality. A bad deed gives a bad result. It is said that Karna Singh became mad before he finally died.

Wherever Swamiji went, he exposed the hypocrisy of the priests and their superstitions. He preached knowledge, explained the true religion and tried to get the people back onto the path of truth. As a result, many people who were earning through sham religious rituals became his enemies as their earnings went down. One such Brahmin gave him a betel leaf laced with poison. When Swamiji realized this, he drank plenty of water and induced vomiting to cleanse his stomach of all the poison. The Tehsildaar of this town was a Muslim and a great devotee of Swamiji. When he learnt of the Brahmin's vile intentions, he wanted to imprison him. Swamiji, however, stopped him from doing so, saying, "I am here not to imprison, but release the people from a prison."

Another similar incident took place in another city. When a Brahmin gave Swamiji a sweet, he offered a piece to him first having realized that it was poisoned. The Brahmin turned pale and Swamiji said, "Why don't you have it? Is it poisoned?" Hearing this the Brahmin quickly ran away from there.

In Bombay (now Mumbai) when the Gosains lost to him in a religious debate, they planned to poison his food. For this, they even brain-washed Swamiji's cook. They gave him five seers of sweets and five rupees. They promised to pay him Rs. 1000/- in cash if he could finish off Swamiji. This they gave him in writing. Somehow Swamiji got news of this and he asked the cook who started trembling. He told Swamiji the whole truth. Swamiji could, if he wanted to, bring the culprits to justice with enough evidence against them. Instead he chose to forgive his enemies.

Swamiji broke the stranglehold of the so called religious leaders and taught the people about the true religion as written in the *Vedas.* With an aim to free all mankind from ignorance and pain he established the Arya Samaj. It was founded on 6th April, 1875 in Chirgaon in Mumbai, in the garden of Dr. Manekchand. Initially

there were 28 rules to be followed, but later only 10 were made permanent. The Arya Samaj inspires people to break down all barriers between each other and treat the entire human race as one large family. Those who had no true knowledge and those who held others captive in a stranglehold of false beliefs and rituals did not like his preaching. They were always on the lookout for a chance to defame and hurt him. Once while he was giving a speech, someone threw a black cobra at him. When the snake crawled up to his feet Swamiji crushed it under his heels and continued with his speech. Once while he was in Jalandhar a rich chieftain, Vikramsingh asked him, "Maharaj! You speak so much about *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), give us a living example."

Swamiji remained silent but as Vikramsingh started off on his four-horse drawn carriage, he held it from behind. The driver whipped the horses again and again but the carriage did not budge an inch. In utter confusion, Vikramsingh looked back and to his amazement saw the Swami holding back the carriage. Swamiji smiled at Vikramsingh and said, "Now, do you see the strength of my *Brahmacharya*?"

It is said, once during the peak of winter Swamiji was sitting with nothing but a loin cloth on his body. Others were shivering even with all the woolen clothes that they had on. Seeing a Sadhu sitting bare bodied in this extreme cold, they were wonder struck. They asked him, "Maharaj! Even this bitter cold does not seem to affect you." He replied, "With the help of Yoga and Brahmacharya a person can rule over the universe."

It is also said, that in that bitter cold, Swamiji made his body sweat to show them another miracle.

Once while spreading religion, Swamiji reached Mathura. He got into a debate with the upholders of religion there. To prove his point he quoted the Vedas. The common priests got nervous. None of their arguments could stand before Swamiji's vast knowledge. They lost in the debate on religion. In order to defame Swamiji, they paid a woman and told her to seek him out in the garden and putting up some false allegations, start a fight with him.

Then we shall come and drive him out of that place. If you are successful, we will pay you well."

At first that woman hesitated, but the priests persuaded her with more gold and jewels. Finally, she succumbed to her greed and the next day went to the garden. Swamiji was sitting deep in meditation. Seeing his innocent and glowing face the woman repented. At that moment Swamiji came out of his trance and seeing a beautiful woman before him, he was surprised. She bent and touched his feet. Then she told him the whole story and placed all the wealth at his feet. Swamiji returned the jewels saying, "Go! And stay on the right path. Staying virtuous throughout your life is the great wealth. Take this jewellery with you."

The priests were shocked to see this change and with fallen faces they moved away from there.

Swamiji was of cheerful and friendly disposition. He would break the egos of the *karmakandi* (ritualistic) Brahmins with humour and laughter. Like the poet Kabir, he too said that if by bathing in the Ganga, shaving one's head and smearing one's body with holy ash, a person could attain paradise, then the fish, sheep and donkeys would be the first to enter heaven. Putting one's total faith in the worship of idols is sheer ignorance. If you want to show respect to your forefathers then imitate their good deeds, look after them and try to keep them happy. Remember that by making them unhappy during their lifetime, and then feeding Brahmins after their death will not make them happy.

Swamiji brought about a number of social reforms in his times. He refuted evil customs like child-marriage and untouchability. He believed that all men were born equal. A person's caste was determined by his work. In other words discriminations like high and low, small and big, are not fair. A Harijan could rise up to be a Brahmin through his work. He started the *Shuddhi* (Purification) Movement, spread education, opened orphanages and ashrams (hermitages) for widows. Due to the reforms, many people became his enemies.

In those days most people in the country were very backward. Swamiji noticed this and wherever he went, he tried to spread.

knowledge through sermons. This brought him great recognition. People stood before him with folded hands. Had it been anyone else they would have asked for wealth, property and titles, become the head of a *mutt* and lead a lavish life, but greed could not touch him. Spreading enlightenment all along in the estates he reached Jodhpur in 1883. The king of Jodhpur welcomed him warmly, brought before him gifts and offerings, then sat on the floor before him. Swamiji caught him by the hand and made him sit on chowki (square seat). He then spoke to him about *rajdharma* (the path to be followed by kings). Following the king's example, many of his subjects too came to listen raptly at what Swamiji had to speak about. Every evening he gave speeches.

At that time the king of Jodhpur was enchanted by a prostitute named Nanhi Jaan. One day when Swamiji reached the *durbar*, he saw Nanhi Jaan seated there. Swamiji berated the king and returning home wrote a letter asking him to leave the woman. Having, thus, lost the favour of the king, Nanhi Jaan was enraged with the Swami. Through the cook she poisoned the Swamiji's glass of milk. Soon after drinking it, Swamiji realized that he had been poisoned. He called and asked the cook if he had poisoned the milk.

The frightened cook fell at his feet and cried bitterly. Anyone else would have handed him over to the law, but Swamiji gave him some money and said, "Take this and flee, for if the people get to hear of this, they will kill you."

The following day Swamiji's health began to fail. He was taken first to Aabu and then to Ajmer, with well known doctors attending to him. It was to no avail. On 30 October, 1883, the day of Depawali (Festival of Light), Swamiji passed away. His last words were, "Oh god! Your ways are great, may your wish be fulfilled."

Swamiji's ideas and teaching spread successfully in north India particularly in the Punjab, he still has a number of followers. The country saw a number of social changes due to his efforts. Mismatched marriages, child marriage, the practice of keeping women within the confines of home, untouchability—people began to realize that all these things were wrong. The Arya Samaj

recognized and supported marriage of child widows. They spread education for boys as well as girls. A number of schools and colleges were opened. Thus he had a big hand in taking the society forward.

Swami Dayanand is considered the rescuer of modern society, the first to promote the use of the word *Swaraj*, and a strong opponent of the many evil customs that were prevalent. At a time when the after-effects of the 1857 Revolt had spread terror everywhere, he boldly proclaimed that self rule was necessary and good.

In 1873, the Bishop of England came to Calcutta when Swami Dayanand was giving his sermons there. Swamiji's words greatly impressed him and he introduced Swami Dayanand to the then Viceroy, North Brooke.

Lord North Brooke said, "By your lectures you have made many enemies. If you want, we will provide you with security."

Swamiji thanked Lord Brooke but refused his help, and said that, "I have full freedom to express my opinions."

On this the Viceroy said, "If you have so much freedom under British rule, should you not praise our system in your speeches?"

Swami Dayanand said that he could not do so as he wanted full freedom for his country. "Every morning and evening I pray that my country gets freedom from the shackles of foreign rule."

Swamiji wrote *Sathyarth Prakash*, a great holy book, in Hindi in the process of uniting the country. Thus, the foundation of Hindi as our national language was laid.

Swami Dayanand was a brave monk, who pulled his country out of the depths of ignorance and superstitions. He was a great reformer and played a major role in awakening the country.

India has been a witness to some great personalities in her long history. These real life heroes have showed us what it takes to become an extraordinary human being with their courage, wisdom and dedication.

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